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By
Mrs. Hugh Fraser

Author of
“*A Diplomatist's Wife in Japan*,”
“*A Little Grey Sheep*,” etc.



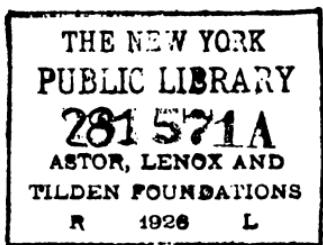
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MARNA'S MUTINY

CHAPTER I

"**T**HERE is no use in saying anything more. I have quite made up my mind about it."

When a woman says this, it means that she is prepared to discuss the matter from a liberal point of view and at great length; but it takes two to carry on a discussion, and this woman was alone, tiresomely and unjustly alone, she would have said, for the person who should have been her companion on this March evening had gone off, in the most disloyal way, to dine with her intimate enemy. Reprials appeared to be imminent. Marna had hesitated about employing such weapons before, because she did not wish to take the edge off them too soon in the combat. But now the time had come. So she finished her coffee and set the cup down quite sternly; then she walked across to her writing-table as if she were going to take command of a battery of artillery. She was a tall girl, with a clear complexion just a shade too dark for her gold shot hair; her eyes were of a changing hazel, where gleams of

gold came and went through the brown; she had the most serious mouth in the world, with an obstinate dimple at one corner. Marna pretended not to know about the dimple, and tried hard to prevent it from influencing her fate; but it would twinkle suddenly, so that all her solemn remarks were turned into funny ones, and then people would not believe how extremely in earnest she was. Her actions were about to show that now.

In the first mildness of the Eastern spring all the windows were open, and eager moths of many shapes came and fluttered round Marna's lamp as she wrote to her only ally, a young married woman who lived a little farther up the hill. This was what Marna wrote:

DEAREST MRS. HAYES, Please call for me on the way to the Carters' dance. I have nobody to go with, as usual. Of course Papa wanted *her* to chaperon me, and of course I said *NO*. He said 'Very well, then you may stay at home,' and he went off to dine with the sweet lady. I will not stay at home, to-night or at any time, *any* more! I will be ready in my jin-rik-sha, and will join you the moment you pass.

Your afflicted,

"MARNA."

She did not look really afflicted; on the contrary, she gave the note to her blue jin-rik-sha slave with a happy smile, as if she were doing a good action.

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"You be at the steps at half-past nine, Rats," she said, and then the O Jo Sama, as Rats would have called her, went off to dress. Rats also had another name in many syllables. But he was thin, and so brown that he was almost black, and "Rats" described him, as Marna felt, most truly.

When she reached her room on the upper floor, a quaint little figure came forward to greet her with a beaming smile, and then the clever Japanese fingers began to undo her frock and prepare for her dressing in the intelligent silence which makes it such a comfort to be waited on by these people.

Marna de Wesloff was the daughter of a Scandinavian gentleman who had accepted the post of Consul at one of the great Japanese ports. A cheerful widower, he was glad to have his only daughter join him when she left the school where all her learning years were passed. He did not realise that the little girl of twelve to whom he had said farewell eight years before had grown into a rather masterful young woman, with an equipment of ready-made ideas and judgments for which he had paid large sums quarterly, but which were as antagonistic to his own pleasant unravelled philosophies as anything could well be. Having lived for many years in the softest old slippers, metaphorically speaking, he found that he was suddenly expected to wear tight boots, day in, day out.

At first he was patient, good man, being proud of showing off such a handsome, well-educated

daughter among his old acquaintances, and telling his startled self-indulgence that the girl must be humoured just at first; that she was too sensible not to take broader views in time. The ribaldry of the club degenerates had a glorious half-hour when Major de Wesloff, in his best coat, was marched past the windows on the first Sunday after his daughter's arrival, bound for church, looking neither to the right nor to the left for fear of having to knock somebody down for laughing at him. Marna, in her full-souled Sabbatarianism, would not allow the jin-rik-shas to be used; she told the puzzled kurumayas who ought to have pulled them that they also might go to church. They understood this much, that a holiday was being granted, and they took advantage of it to get drunk and beat the cook. Marna was not scandalised at the drunkenness—few Scandinavians would be—but a cook with a broken rib was an inconvenience, and she never suggested church to the jin-rik-sha men again. After the second Sunday, when she caught her parent smuggling bon-bons between the leaves of a hymn-book to a pretty American missionary in the next seat, she gave up that branch of his reform, not sulkily, but with an astonished suspicion that perhaps she did not know best about everything. This was the first time such a thought had presented itself in all her young and healthy life.

The consciousness of her ignorance had grown

upon her in the eighteen months which had passed between that day and the spring evening when she sent her declaration of independence up to Mrs. Hayes. She had acknowledged herself in the wrong at least a dozen times, with great generosity; in the wrong on points of the oddly complete little Port etiquette; wrong in wanting early dinners and cold suppers on Sunday; wrong in wearing the pale rainbow crapes which turn all feminine heads the moment they enter Nozaway'a shop, and which only skins like milk and moonlight can bear; wrong, above all, in trying to turn her portly, good-looking, pleasure-loving father into a nice little boy out of Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales. He treated her with everlasting kindness, let her do exactly as she pleased about the expenses (she had an income of her own inherited from her mother), and really had, for his second idea in life, the one of giving "Myarna," as he called her, a thoroughly good time. His first idea, of course, was to treat himself in like manner, and hence these tears; for most of his "good times" were provided in the drawing-room of an attractive widow, in whom Marna, three weeks after her arrival, discovered a Designing Minx.

The widow was prepared to do a great deal to please Major de Wesloff, and for his sake consented to make herself the chaperon of a high-spirited, handsome girl, so young as to make her look old, so tall as to throw her into insignificance. But

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Mrs. Adair's self-abnegation was thrown away on Marna, who, after her decision as to the lady's minxhood, refused to touch the beautifully gloved hand of friendship held out to her. On the contrary, she stood up to her foe, as the butcher-boys say, with a joyful gallantry more suggestive of her ancestry than of her education. Her weapons were subtler than those of the Vikings, but perhaps not less effective. Mrs. Adair was really growing truthful, because she could not launch a single necessary fib, not even the lightest shallop of falsehood, without having to meet Marna's big, suntrue glance, full front, throwing the venture back, a hopeless wreck to the strand; for Marna was too young to know that there is often more real truth in the little kindly fiction than in the big brutal fact. Did the Major arrange a dinner or a picnic, Mrs. Adair was put in the broadest light, and the soup was sure to be full of pepper, which, as is well known, will bring a flush to the most marble nose; that ~~was~~ Mrs. Adair, if it ever had been marble, was chiefly powder now. It was one of Marna's strongest arguments for her enemy's general unworthiness (and her wholesale young cruelty recognised none of the more civilised rules of warfare) that the widow employed such little aids to decadent beauty. In spite, or because of, them, she was quite a pretty woman still.

If Marna had been compelled to admit her own fallibility on several subjects, she told herself that

her judgment of Mrs. Adair afforded triumphant compensation for such passing defeats. On this point she felt more fiercely right every day, and the conviction did not bring peace into the pretty house, set in its garden on the Eastern hillside, and looking out over the Bund and the Bay.

There is so little of Japan, beyond the scenery, in the life of the Ports, that Marna's profound ignorance of everything Japanese was hardly a reproach to her. She shared it with all the other foreigners who huddle together close to their counting-houses, turning their eyes away from the country in which they are condemned to live, towards the harbour where the English steamers come and bring the English news. The passionate scorn of everything not British is doubtless a strand in the huge strength of the bands which bind the Empire in one; but individually it seems a pity to live all one's life in strange and beautiful lands, with an English newspaper tied over one's eyes.

Marna's dressing never took very long; but when it was over, and the amah handed her her gloves and her fan, time had already softened the young Valkyr into a girl pricking her ears for the first bars of the dance music, and laudably anxious to reach the scene in time to have her programme filled up with the names of the early Mr. Rights, instead of the late Mr. Wrongs. Také shook out her mistress's light skirts, with their dainty under-cloud of silk and lace, and Marna glanced gravely

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at her own reflection, to be sure that all was ~~more~~ than right, since she had enemies as well as partners to subdue. She wore her so-called low dress good deal higher than our English girls feel obliged to do, but it showed a faultless young neck and throat, and the bare arms below were as round and strong as Gudrun's own when she stood upon the threshold of Eastholm, "the grey cats playing round her ankles slim."

Marna wished that Mrs. Hayes could have looked her over before she left home, for in reality she felt a good deal frightened at this necessary act of revolt. Major de Wesloff's patience had given out at last, and there had been rather a dramatic scene that afternoon, when Marna vetoed his kind arrangement about the dance. In a way she was right, Major de Wesloff not being the first or only conquest of the "sweet lady," and perhaps it was because he knew in his heart that she was not the most advantageous protector for a young girl that he was so extremely angry with his daughter for saying so. Marna would have to meet him and Mrs. Adair at the dance, and though the idea of his astonishment was quite amusing, yet the possibility of another scene with him set her heart beating uncomfortably fast.

As she came downstairs, with Také holding up her trailing frills, a little rattle of wheels on the stones was heard, and in a moment she was packed into her funny handcarriage and had started off to

join her friend. Mrs. Hayes showed her pretty rosy face from under the other black hood, and called out: "All alone again? Poor old girl!" But there was no time for discussion, and away went the men, one in the shafts and one behind each jin-rik-sha, the bobbing lanterns making queer patterns on the road as they ran.

Mrs. Carter was the most hospitable of women, and lived in a great tumble-down house at the far end of the Settlement. Something was always going on there—a wedding or a funeral (she had really lent her house to friends for both), private theatricals, dances; orphans were housed, stray bachelors' socks were darned, English servants abandoned by their masters were comforted—it was the social dispensary, where the only ticket necessary for getting a thing was to say that you wanted it.

As Marna and her friend took their cloaks off in the hall, Mrs. Hayes whispered:

"It ought to be a good dance. She's got all the men off that new yacht that came in yesterday—four or five of them. It is such a change to dance with somebody new, once in a way, isn't it?"

"Those smart men terrify me," said Marna. "As a rule they dance atrociously, too! I like my old partners. Yes, Willie," this to a boy of seventeen or eighteen at most, who rushed towards her on entering. "You are the first. How many do you want?"

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He was a clerk in the bank, and a great friend of Miss de Wesloff. Perhaps it should be explained that in the Port Peerage a bank clerk takes rank much higher than his friend of the Tea Go-down, and gives himself airs accordingly.

Marna sailed off with Willie Barnes, forgetting all her apprehensions in the joy of a clear floor and a good band, and five minutes later pretty Mrs. Hayes was following her round the room.

Either Willie steered badly, or somebody else did, for suddenly, with no crowd dancing as yet, they cannoned into another couple with dire results. Willie was shot off to a bench near the wall, where he landed on his head, and Marna found herself sitting on the floor, in fits of laughter, while a strange man was trying to pull her up by both hands. She was on her feet with a spring, and stood before him, still laughing, but rubbing one elbow, which had taken the brunt of the fall.

"I am so awfully sorry," said the stranger. "Did you hurt yourself? It was all my fault."

His partner had disappeared, and they two were standing up alone in the middle of the room. Marna began to move away slowly, but he joined her.

"I do hope you are all right?" he said. "May I get you anything? A glass of wine or something?"

"Oh no, thanks," she answered good-naturedly. "I am not hurt. You took me off my feet a bit, that was all."

His voice was so pleasant that she could not

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help looking at his face, and she found that to her liking too. In colour it was what is known as pinky-brown, the kind of complexion that takes on hundreds of little freckles like bits of brown gold-leaf, and still has a fine red glow beneath them. The eyes were of a clear deep grey, with dark and heavy lashes, and the nose, of an aggressively commanding outline, dipped at the end towards a brown moustache that just now covered a smile. "You are one of the men off the yacht," thought Marna, "and of course you dance atrociously, just as I knew you would." But to him she said:

"Did you kill my partner? What has become of him?"

"I will go and see," said the assailant; "and may I have a dance? I will get Mrs. Carter to introduce me properly in a minute. My name is Kilmorack."

As he went off to look for poor Willie, Marna's eyes followed him with an amused smile. "You are a very composed kind of person," she thought, "and I rather like you, Mr. Kilmorack, but—risk my reputation by dancing with you? No!" For Marna was a beautiful dancer.

He did not find Willie Barnes. That simple youth, seeing that Miss Marna had picked herself up none the worse for her slide, went off to get his coat brushed clean of the white dust from Mrs. Carter's floorcloth; so Kilmorack turned his attention to his hostess instead.

"Oh, Mrs. Carter," he said, "please introduce me

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to that young lady. I have just knocked her down and I want to apologise."

They came back to where he had left Marna standing, and Mrs. Carter murmured "Lord Kilmorack, Miss de Wesloff," and glided away. Marna was quite the "show" girl of the Settlement, and just now the young man was its chief guest. He was the owner of the beautiful white yacht at anchor in the bay. Already a little tired of the party he had brought to amuse him, he did not disdain Mrs. Carter's kind queer hospitality. His fellow-travellers grumbled a little when he made it clear that he wished them to accompany him to the dance at the Consulate. The women, of course, refused outright; they were a mother and daughter who had so faithfully dogged his steps for a year or more that it seemed only too likely that he would succumb at last, and marry one—which meant both—of them. Mrs. Mowbray was handsome, and divorced, not without a show of reason on the other side. Her daughter was more than handsome, daringly amusing, and was said to be running her mother's reputation pretty close already. They had got the dresses they stood up in because the dressmaker had looked up Lord Kilmorack's rent-roll, and thought she would give them one more chance of marrying a rich man and paying her bill. Never were two women more in want of a husband. The other members of the party were Lough Brandon, a newspaper king; Teddy Ansell, a man "in mines"; and an Irishman

called, strange to say, O'Brien, whom Kilmorack had brought for the sake of his brogue and two old stories which he still told so well that they took the shine off the newspaper man's new ones. And there was also the chaplain.

"What the dickens will you be taking a padre to sea for?" Terence O'Brien had asked, as Kilmorack and he were discussing the list of guests. "You don't present such a strikingly religious appearance on land, my friend."

"Perhaps that is the reason," said Kilmorack. "If I should come to a sudden end on my travels, I would like to have Father Andrews to help me go easy! On shore there are plenty of 'sky-pilots,' but when I go to sea I take one of my own."

For Kilmorack was a Scotch Catholic, as all his forefathers ~~had~~ been, and was very proud of his religion, ~~without~~ troubling it much on weekdays. Father ~~Andrews~~ was a hard-working parish priest who had ~~just~~ broken down, and the voyage would be the very thing to set him up again. Kilmorack was laudably shy of owning to his good motives in public, so Father Andrews was to draw his salary as chaplain and secretary, and looked forward with great delight to visiting all the missions in Japan and writing descriptions of them for the religious newspapers. ~~He was a~~ young man, not over thirty-five, but ~~he~~ appeared much older till he laughed, and then there was such a boyish ring in the laugh and such a kindling of fun in the eyes that it seemed

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as if Father Andrews must be hiding a schoolboy under his cassock.

As soon as the party landed, he had started on a little round of visits to different missions, and was enjoying himself immensely in his own way.

Besides these, there was a cousin of Kilmorack, a ruined Guardsman, a charming boy, whose acquaintance with the turf was portentous for one so young. He had been brought to the Far East to keep him out of the Bankruptcy Court for six months longer if possible (there was an unspoken hope that Mr. Ansell would come to his assistance, since the young man was distantly related to his wife), and also to fall in love with Miss Betty Mowbray, who made a speciality of "dear boys" and had long ago put down Simon de Fresel as one of the dearest.

There was another woman on board, the wife of the mining potentate, pretty and quiet, too good for some of the company in which she found herself.

Lady Cecilia Ansell had hoped to "make it out" with young Simon and Kilmorack; but the other women were better mounted, as it were, and much keener in the chase, so they distanced her in that direction, and she was thrown back on the society of her husband, of whom she had seen almost as much as she wished for, already. None of these ladies would take the trouble to put on a ball-gown to dance with bank clerks, and Kilmorack was not very sorry that they stayed away.

Marna de Wesloff, whose people belonged to the

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exclusive little Scandinavian aristocracy, and whose mother when lady-in-waiting to a princess had been a personage much to be counted with at Court, was quite as willing to dance with the clerks as with any Crown Prince. She still took it for granted that if she met them in a friend's house, they were gentlemen, and had as much right to be there as she had. But then Marna was a lady.

Neither Major de Wesloff nor Mrs. Adair was really hard-hearted enough to leave a young girl to sit alone at home while a dance was going on, even if she had been rude to the "Firm." After dinner, the Major was in an almost too mellow state of mind. Mrs. Adair did not feel sentimental; also she wanted time to change her frock before the dance, so she said to him:

"Now, Major, go home and take your naughty girl to the Carters'. Do you think I am going to let her miss a dance just because she hates me? I will meet you there later."

"She does not deserve it," he said, trying to frown, and smiling rather aimlessly instead.

"She will enjoy it all the more for that," replied Mrs. Adair. "You know, indeed, dear friend, you must not make me out a worse dragon than I am!"

"If the dragons were all like you, what a beautiful place the world would be!" exclaimed the Major, and immediately began to wonder what he meant by saying it. Something pleasant, evidently, for the

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lady was smiling at him, and saying in her balmiest tones :

"There's a dear thing! Go home and make friends with Minnie, and I will put on my mauve gown—the one that you like so much."

"Angel!" murmured the Major, as she closed the door, and he rose, rather carefully, to go and obey her commands. The diminutive of his daughter's name had been one of the strongest proofs of Mrs. Adair's designing Minxhood in Marna's eyes. What impertinence, she thought, to turn her beautiful name, with the marching note in it, to a "Minnie" that came tripping along like high heels in a polka!

When Major de Wesloff reached home, the place was empty, and a hurried visit to his daughter's bedroom only showed him Také putting things to rights.

"Missie Marna?" she said. "Oh, long time gone away. Missie Hayes come fetch. She no savvy Danna* San come back!"

Danna San went downstairs, very angry at being cheated out of an act of magnanimity. His headstrong rebel had not even waited to be forgiven. Here was half an hour to be got rid of before he could meet his goddess at the dance, for she had not Marna's eagerness to begin early and finish late. He sat down in the deserted dining-room for a smoke. The lamp was burning badly, Marna's

* The master.

coffee-tray stood cold on the table, and his favourite chair had got to the wrong side of the fireplace. No wonder that he, also, felt the time for strong measures approaching. He rehearsed some very fine speeches as he smoked—speeches well seasoned with paternal majesty, grave warning, and really touching pathos. If Marna could only keep awake long enough to listen to them when she got back from the dance, he felt convinced that life would take on a different colour. His own, which had been rather vivid after dinner, subsided gently, his musings soon became as misty as the smoke, and he was rewarded for all his good intentions by a sweet, refreshing sleep.

He did not awake till nearly eleven, and was horrified to find how late it was. His patient kurumaya had been sitting on the steps for nearly two hours.

When he reached the scene of battle the first engagement had been fought without him, for Marna had cut Mrs. Adair dead; and when Kilmorack, with whom she was dancing for the third time already, asked: "Who is that rather pretty woman in mauve whom you wouldn't bow to?" she replied in un-subdued tones: "Oh, a most objectionable person! Her name is Mrs. Adair."

Marna had quite forgotten about her reputation as a good dancer, or else she was ready to risk it. She was enjoying herself immensely when, stopping for a moment near a doorway, she looked round and

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found herself confronted by her father, who had unfortunately overheard her wicked remark about Mrs. Adair.

"Marna, I wish to speak to you," he said, in their own language; "come into the next room."

He looked so much in earnest that it seemed better to obey, so, with a word to her partner, she followed the Major till they reached the far end of the supper-room, almost empty just now.

"What does this mean?" he asked sternly. "How did you venture to come here without my permission?"

"Your permission?" cried his daughter. "Why, you begged and entreated me to come here with you—with you and your friend."

"And when you refused I told you to stay at home," he replied, descending to recrimination.

"Well, you see I wouldn't!" said Miss Marna, with her nose in the air and the dimple coming into her cheek. "I thought it would look better for *you* if I were here to chaperon you. You and Mrs. Adair are not even engaged yet—and how she has been going on with that man from the yacht!"

"Marna," said her parent, trying to remember some of his moving speeches, "you will come home with me at once. I refuse to be disgraced by you in public."

"And suppose I will not?" said the naughty girl, whose heart was beating so loudly that she felt she must go on fighting, or faint. "I am rather big to

carry, am I not? Besides I have all my dances engaged. I will go home when I am ready, please."

"I intend to send you back to Europe by the very next steamer," said the poor Major, his lip quivering. He really loved her very much, and he was horribly hurt.

Suddenly both Marna's arms were round his neck, and she was kissing his flushed cheeks and saying:

"Oh, dear old Daddy, let us go away together. You know I do love you better than anybody in the world, after all."

There were one or two tears in her own eyes, but she dashed them away, and in another minute was making him waltz round the ballroom with her, much to the annoyance of the young Englishman, her late partner, whom she appeared to have entirely dismissed from her mind.

Still, long after she had reached home and taken off her pretty frock, she sat thinking things over; and she realised that as they now stood, the reconciliation, hearty though it was, could only be a truce. Mrs. Adair was still to be counted with, and she would not renounce the Major any more than he would really renounce her. A triple alliance was impossible, and even hopeful Marna knew that two days would not pass before she would be forced into another pronunciamento on the subject of the person in mauve. Now she regarded her recent peace-making with almost comic regret. It was good to know that her father did care so much for her really,

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but this treaty, too hastily concluded, tied her hands for the present, gave her no guarantees for the future, and left her enemy free to advance.

"I ought to disappear for a time," she thought; "make a kind of false retreat, and watch her from a distance. I am sure she will hang herself if I only make the rope long enough. And I could come back if I heard that poor papa were really being caught. After all, he has known her for some years, and they are not married yet. I know! I will take Mrs. Hayes off to Chuzenji for a fortnight. That's the place!"

In the hills at Chuzenji there was a cottage which had been Major de Wesloff's present to his daughter the summer before. It owned a bit of pine-wood, a few yards of the lake shore, and the kind of climate that one visits in one's dreams if one can. The ground (of course bought in the name of a Japanese), the house itself, and all the furniture, consisting of little beyond mats and cooking utensils, had cost about two hundred pounds, and was Marna's very own. It seemed ungrateful to fortify herself therein against the giver, but then it would be finally for his own good.

CHAPTER II

It is little to say that Major de Wesloff was relieved when Marna came down, very sweet and good, to breakfast the next morning, and said that she thought she would go off to the cottage for a week or two, if she could get Mrs. Hayes to go with her. As Mrs. Hayes was always ready for anything that could be called a spree there was not much doubt of her answer. She was only a year or two older than Marna, and her husband, the junior partner in a very prosperous firm, had no objection to her amusing herself. The young housekeeper in the East has so little to do that unless the small family makes an early appearance, she has every opportunity of becoming a confirmed butterfly. The less you fuss over Japanese servants, the better they work. Those who take service with strangers come as a rule from a much lower class than those who would occupy corresponding positions in a Japanese gentleman's household; but even the strangers' servants are zealous to please, quick to learn, and on the whole no more dishonest than Europeans similarly placed.

"It is a little early yet for the hills," observed Major de Wesloff, feeling that he ought to remind Marna of the fact, but hoping that she would disregard it.

"I should like it to be all snow," she replied. "How one misses the real Northern winter in this warm-tea climate! I would give anything for an hour's skating or a sleigh ride," and her eyes shone wistfully for pleasant memories.

"I called last winter a very cold one," said her father; "but I have been out here so long I have forgotten the touch of the real frost. You may get a snow-storm at Chuzenji; look out."

"Over all those flame-coloured azaleas on the hill-sides!" she cried. "How beautiful it would be! Well, I am going up to see what Mrs. Hayes says."

The Major never was told what Mrs. Hayes said, but Marna appeared to be satisfied, and announced that they would go to her hermitage the next day. In fact, Mrs. Hayes had consented rather unwillingly for once. In the first place it would be cold; in the second place she had a dinner-party in five days, and there was another dance coming on which she was unwilling to miss: and all that Marna could obtain was that she would come for three days and then return to the town.

"I shall have to leave you, my dear, and how on earth are you to stay up there all by yourself? People would say all sorts of things!"

"Well, then, they may," returned Marna. "only we will not let them begin just yet. You can come back here and say that you left me with another friend. We will call Take the friend."

"I would see you in your place," continued Mrs.

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Hayes. "Really, I think you may return to find your fledgelings flown; I am sure Mrs. Adair wants to settle down at last."

"That is the opposite of flying, anyway," said Marna, "but in that case I shall never come back at all. I am twenty-one, I have a little bit of an income—quite enough to keep me alive—and if father prefers mauve powder minxs to his own daughter, so much the worse for him. Mind you are at the station by nine o'clock. Oh, you dear, it is so good of you to help me!"

A Japanese household can be subdivided at will, and there is always a representative left in office. Marna took away Také, a "boy," the under-cook, and her own jin-rik-sha man. A decent woman at once appeared from the servants' quarters to look after Major de Wesloff's shirt buttons; cook number one confided to "boy," who ruled them all, that he had long felt a third aid to be necessary in the kitchen, and this was certainly the time to instal him; and when that was done, Major de Wesloff might hope in vain to shake the extra servant off. Rats was always considered Marna's property, and smiled happily when he got his orders, which meant increased pay for the rougher work. A couple of resident Brownies who took care of the cottage from year's end to year's end for six shillings a month would complete the staff.

Major de Wesloff accompanied his daughter to the station, and effusively thanked Mrs. Hayes for

being willing to go and bury herself in the mountains to keep Marna company. Mrs. Hayes said that the time would seem short to her, and wondered inwardly what she should find to say when next they met. But Marna, smiling at her from over her father's shoulder, with the dimple saying many things not meant for him, seemed confident that all would be right.

"You seem to be taking a great many things for such a short time," remarked the Major, as the servants filled up a whole compartment with her possessions. "I hope you will find jin-rik-shas to carry them all," he added, remembering the long climb to the cottage from the last railway station.

Marna was rather dignified at the last, and Major de Wesloff left the platform wondering whether he were really a naughty little boy or Marna a naughty big girl? In any case he had a few days of peace before him; and he was going to lunch with Mrs. Adair, just as he had done in the good old times before any one expected anything of him. Daughters ought to marry at one-and-twenty, Mrs. Adair said. What a good thing if Marna could pick out a nice young man and idealise him instead of her father!

These reflections were going through the Major's head while Marna, happy as a bird let out of a cage, sat in her corner and nibbled chocolate and made wild plans for passing the rest of her life in the hills. A "nice young man," if such a creature existed, had certainly no place in her thoughts. She meant to

fall in love some day, classically, triumphantly, in the most perfect and romantic way. It should only happen once, she had decided; and whatever the fortune of her venture, she would be faithful to it for ever. But till now, what with looking after papa, and preventing Mrs. Adair from kidnapping her tailor (a recognised form of piracy in every Settlement), and learning Japanese, and keeping a casual home for friendless dogs, and preventing her gloves from getting damp-spots, there had been no time to think of minor things, and falling in love had been put aside with the rest.

Two of the dogs which were being taken to Chuzenji—a disreputable-looking bulldog who had a touching story of his own, together with an inexperienced fox-terrier of doubtful manners—were travelling third class with the servants, and their protesting howls rang down the line at every station; the third, a kind of white rat with pink eyes and a game leg, was tucked away under Marna's arm. She said he was very soft-hearted, and could not bear to be separated from her. He had been picked up in a puddle outside her door, a very sick puppy indeed, and the Major, who resented having mongrels brought to meals, called him "The Reptile"; but he was now known as "Rep," and swaggered about with one of Marna's silver bangles round his neck for a collar.

It was rather a long journey, and the longest part had to be accomplished after leaving the train at

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the foot of the hill, up which a winding road led to one of those jewel lakes laid on the high bosom of the hills, as if to steal the first reflections of heaven's blue before it sinks towards river and sea. Half-way up the wooded steeps was Nikko, full of shrines and holy groves, and memories of long dead great ones. But Marna had not wished to have her cottage there; it was too majestic and also was too accessible, and all the associations were ready-made. Besides, she loved the heights, and having once seen the lake above, dreaming in small gold ripples under the limitless blue, nothing would make her descend from the lovely eyrie. The Scandinavians have always been passionate worshippers of beauty, and the warmer, the more sensuously exquisite the loveliness, the stronger its hold on these sons of the north wind, with spun rime on their hair and the very crash of ice in their speech, and the hot Aryan blood running as blue in their veins to-day as ever it did a thousand generations back.

Up at Chuzenji, Marna always forgot the palpitating little excitements of life in the Port; she rowed on the lake and wandered in the woods, with her absurd tribe of dogs, in whose hunting she took what they would have called an intelligent interest; she was happy and contented, and glad to see a friend or get a new book if such distractions came her way, but quite willing to do without them. To tell the truth, she was a much nicer girl in the mountains than in the prickly atmosphere of the town, and

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perhaps that was why she was better contented with her own society.

Even Mrs. Hayes, an irreclaimable little cockney, felt the influence of the enchanting spot. She and Marna walked down the path towards the lake before entering the house. The sunset had thrown a fan of rose up the primrose sky, and a crescent moon, scarce embodied yet, was sinking, light as thistle-down, towards the rosy bath that would soon be spilt in the sea and leave the vault all violet for the stars. No relenting there, no questionings about to-day and to-morrow, as in our clement twilight. Lights out till *réveille*, and Orion to turn out the guard!

Which of us has not longed to possess that fairy cottage only found in the "Richter Album" or done in cardboard on the stage?—a cottage where no desecrating housemaid deflowers our privacy, where no curious eyes dictate our deportment, where every little corner of sweet-smelling woods and dainty cupboard is ours, and where we may sit at a real lattice and talk to real roses without fearing the soot of publicity. Hedge in this imperial freedom with high palings of green bamboo, set notch to notch like organ-pipes, and backed with a hundred serried ranks of our pine lances; open it only to the west and the water's edge, where our own boat floats idly on the crisp ripple that froths on the dun velvet sand in our own little bay—could the Mint buy us anything more precious?

Marna had passed two summers in the cottage, and knew how to settle down there with a turn of the hand, as it were. The nights were still extremely fresh at that altitude, and it was pleasant, when all the shutters were closed and the inner screens run into place, to have a lighted brazier brought into the long, low sitting-room, already full of branches of the first azalea and cosy with cushions and draperies. The floors were mats, of course, and as the brazier warmed the room, they threw out their sweet grassy smell. Over every opening hung draperies of heavy mosquito-netting, dyed to Marna's favourite robin's-egg blue, to keep out the winged intruders who sting and sing.

The house was fairly roomy, having two storeys, and a row of six or seven bedrooms opening into the upper verandahs; and it had been Marna's joy to have tribes of young friends, boys and girls, come up to stay for a few days at a time. It was delightful to run about with them when they were there, and still more delightful to resume her solitary sovereignty when they were gone. Major de Wesloff regularly arranged to spend the whole summer in Chuzenji, but solitude had no great charms for him; so work constantly cropped up at the Consulate, and at other times Mrs. Adair saw a good deal of him in Nikko, the summer centre of Port beauty and fashion, whither Marna refused to be drawn by any invitations which involved smart frocks. The little society potentates have their reception days in Nikko

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just as they do in town, and afternoon tea with gloves and frock-coats makes a funny picture among the solemn pine-groves and scarlet pillared porches.

The two women were sitting together on the steps of the verandah, while the boy cleared away the breakfast things in the sunny wheat-coloured dining-room behind them. It was a glorious morning, balmy yet crisp. The lake was twinkling in leisurely splendour out there in the spring sunshine, and in the pine-wood near by the insect song was buzzing warm over the scented needle carpet—the song that would not be silent, except at night, from now till next October.

Joss, the “crush-nosed, human-hearted” bulldog, and his disciple, Bob the terrier, were digging like mad in the brown sand. Rep, who had told them a naughty story about a rat he had seen there, sat by Marna’s side, and winked at her as they finally reached brackish water and withdrew, coughing and spluttering, and rather inclined to fight each other.

“What a heavenly day!” exclaimed Marna, laying her head on her knees so as to see the view sideways. “I do wish papa could have fallen in love with you, Mrs. Hayes, instead of with the Minx. I should have loved to have you for a step-daughter!”

“That is what my position would certainly have been,” replied Mrs. Hayes, laughing; “you would have ruled me with a rod of iron, my dear. But where would Charlie come in?”

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"I forgot that you have one husband, already," said Marna; "and even in the Far East I suppose one cannot have two? How terrible, though, to be tied to one man for ever and ever! What happens when one gets tired of him?"

"Lots of things that good little girls must not talk about," replied Suzette Hayes, trying to make her pretty face look most severe; "but one doesn't get tired of him if he is like Charlie, you see."

"Were you very, *very* much in love with Charlie?" Marna asked, rather indiscreetly, perhaps. Her friend's husband always seemed grossly overrated in Marna's eyes.

Mrs. Hayes leaned forward with a happy little blush in her cheeks.

"In love, my dear?" she cried. "You never saw anything so utterly, ridiculously in love as I was! The day Charlie proposed—we both knew he was going to do it—he came to take me for a walk out over the cliffs at home. We couldn't either of us find a single word to say, and the only thing I could think of was to take my jacket off, and put it on again, and then be too hot, and take it off again. At last we sat down on a bench under the myrtles, and in two minutes my umbrella blew away over the cliff, and I did not even see it go. Charlie says I kissed him first; but I am sure I didn't. And the walk home that evening! I felt as if I were on my head, for the ships all seemed to have ten

masts, and the windmills were all turning different ways. Oh, there's nothing like being in love!"

"And—and now?" asked Marna, wrinkling up her forehead. "Do you feel like that now?"

"Of course not!" said Mrs. Hayes. "I was in love with Charlie then—now I love him. There's all the difference between the two things."

"Which is best?" asked persistent Marna.

"Oh, this, of course!" said Mrs. Hayes; and then she added with a little sigh: "But it is not half the fun."

"I have tried to fall in love, but I cannot manage it," said Marna. "I believe I am too old. After all, old maids seem to have very good times."

"Don't believe a word of it!" cried Mrs. Hayes, jumping up. "How should they know a good time from a bad one? Come out on the lake; it is a sin to stay in the house on such a day."

A few minutes later they had pushed out from Marna's bay into the wide blue daylight of the lake. Suzette Hayes was lying in the bows, on a pile of pink cushions, with a scarlet parasol focusing the sun on her head; and Marna, her straw hat tilted down over her eyes, her blue linen shirt falling away from her throat and rolled back to the elbow, was sending the little skiff along with smooth, even strokes that soon took it out of sight of the three dogs, who had watched the embarkation superciliously and howled to be taken up as soon as the boat had started.

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"You know, my dear, I really ought to go back to-morrow," said Suzette, after a silence. "I have not ordered a single thing for my dinner-party."

"Give me two days," pleaded Marna. "Providence will make it up to you by sending some contraband game into the market. And think how nice you will look after two days of this sort of complexion tonic."

"I hope I shall not get burnt," exclaimed Mrs. Hayes, nearly upsetting the boat in an attempt to catch a glimpse of the colour of her little nose in the water. "Well, for your sake I will stay till Saturday morning; not an hour longer."

Saturday morning came all too soon, and after Rats had started to pull Mrs. Hayes down to the station, Marna had a few minutes of depression. She had never tried this complete isolation before, and she could not quite answer for the effect it might produce upon herself. These apprehensions were not mingled with any nervous qualms, for she felt as safe in her lonely cottage as at the Consulate in the town. Her arrival had been notified to the inspector, who came with his subordinate to pay his respects and assure her of his services. During the two summers that she had been at Chuzenji, she had made friends with the innkeeper and one or two of the humble inhabitants of the place, talking to them in her odd, broken Japanese with so much courage that it made up for all her mistakes. Of course a thief might come—for those little paper

shanties are a joy to the wandering burglar—but there were the men-servants, and Marna felt equal to accounting for two thieves at least herself, with the toy revolver which she kept loaded, wrapped up in a pocket-handkerchief, inside a slipper under her bed. She was horribly afraid of it.

The upper hills in the end of March repay the traveller for a few bleak hours or belated snows. The Japanese have made March the girls' month, and there is something very feminine in its thousand changes of mood and measure. One day the rain is hurled down in straight black lances on our roof. The next breaks in a balmy dream of soft sunshine, nascent peach blossoms, bridal veils of light and moisture trailing on every hilltop; the fruit-trees burst in their rosy foam, the wild azalea runs in fire from hill to hill, the wistaria tosses out the bunch of downy, grey beans that will give you your own height in purple garlands by-and-by; the gardener frees the palms from their winter wrappers of matting, and the green leaves seem to clap their hands at feeling the light; and you wonder why Narataké still leaves his delicate maze of string, netting the pine-tree twigs to the mast he planted by its trunk in November? Perhaps because the days are short still, and he likes to get back to his snug cottage behind the shrubbery and smoke his pipe while Mrs. Narataké gets his supper. Doubtless he will liberate the twigs from their leading-strings to-morrow morning.

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And to-morrow morning comes, and you go to your window for your first breakfast of fresh air, your first glance towards Fuji over the trees of the garden, and a thin, white mantle of snow is on everything, from Fuji to the orange-tree by your doorstep. The palms are holding shovelfuls of it in their green fans, and are none the worse; but Narataké's cherished pine-branches, level as an early sunbeam, would have been weighed down a dozen times over—weighed down so that they would never regain their shape, but for the elaborate rigging of little strings that holds them all in place. But how beautiful this blossom world is, everywhere breaking through the soft, muffling whiteness with gallant tints of rose and violet, and pale green and orange, that only shine out the braver for the spotless background. And they are right, these brilliant firstlings of the spring, for the March snows melt in the March sun, and long before he has set, the victory is with them.

The night closed in sharp and still on Marna in her cottage after her friend had left her. She was glad of the lighted brazier and the warm lamps which are so often used for heating our rooms in Japan. Také had piled a mountain of silk wadded quilts on her bed, and Marna crept under them and dreamed that she was a tiny girl in Copenhagen, with an apple roasting on the top of the porcelain stove for her to have the first thing in the morning. And when the morning came, Také laughed as she

opened the shutters, and her hair had white powderings among its jetty twists, because she had run across the garden after Rep, and one of the little shrubs had shaken down all its new-fallen crystals on her head.

"What have you been doing?" asked Marna sleepily, and gazing on her maid in wonder.

"Rep-San tree-leg dog too quick time rhumatismus get!" explained Také, whose strange English was much better than Marna's Japanese. And then she produced the pink-eyed one from the folds of the narrow black apron in which she had wrapped his ugly little body. Even a "tree-leg" dog must be treated with honour if one's mistress loves him.

"Oh, is it snowing?" exclaimed the mistress. "Hurrah! Bring my breakfast quick, Také, and I'll go and make a slide. Oh, I *wish* I had somebody to play with!"

This remark showed that perhaps Rep's mistress was not quite so old as she thought herself. By the time she had got down to the bathroom, in straw slippers and kimono, the snow had stopped falling, and she peered out through the little window to try and gauge its thickness. Even the deep tank full of bubbling warm water, perfumed with its lining of orange-wood, where Marna liked to dive about like a mermaid in warm weather, could not delay her to-day. A plunge and a rub, and she was upstairs again, and very soon out in the white garden, where the azaleas had not dimmed a single flame-coloured

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frill for the snow, and then she danced down the path in her short skirt, the cold bringing a bright colour into her cheeks and setting her shining hair a-curl till the little gold rings framed her face and got into her eyes.

She turned once, at the sound of a whine from the three-legged one, and saw him shivering on the top step and distinctly asking if she thought it his duty to follow. "Go back, Rep!" she cried, and as he fled into the house she came out through the bamboo-gate into the pine-wood beyond. There was a hill in the heart of it, a little steep round hill just the right size for tobogganing, but Marna had neither sled nor snow-shoes, and pondered for a moment how to arrange matters. Then she ran back to the house and brought out (hurriedly, for fear the servants should see what a child she was) a small long table of the Japanese kind, with legs not more than a foot high. This, turned upside down with a rug inside, made a perfect snow carriage, and Marna got it up to the top of her hill and came rushing down the side at a fine rate, the snow flying in powdery spray from before her, and covering her dark blue dress, her rosy face, and gold-ringed hair with diamond dust, while the pines waved aside and let the sun shine through on the steep white road, to which they themselves made a shadowy background.

She was racing down for the third time, wondering how much longer such breathless pleasure could

possibly last under such a sun, when she caught a glimpse of a figure coming through the trees towards the foot of her hill from the right. Three facts were clear to her at once: the man was a European, he had wandered in by mistake, and he would reach the path just in time to be run over.

She could not stop herself, but she shouted at the top of her voice, "Look out! Out of the way! Stand still!" in more than one language, for who was to say what this wanderer might understand? Alas! he thought some one was calling for help, ran forward and reached the foot of the slide just as a catapult with a girl on top appeared to be shot at him through the air. There was a shock, a cry, and then he landed on his head in a little snow-drift with somebody else who was struggling wildly beside him, a very hard substance on top, and a furious barking of dogs in his ears. The situation was distinctly fresh.

Freshness was what Lord Kilmorack had come a long way to seek, but so much of it all at once was paralysing. At last the table was removed from above him, and a very contrite voice said, with suspicious catches of laughter between the words:

"Oh, I am so sorry! Are you much hurt?"

He got the snow out of his eyes, scrambled round into a sitting position, and looked up. There, holding out both hands to him, was a tall girl, with eyes drowned in laughter and smiling red lips not half

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so contrite as the words just spoken. Then they recognised each other, and Marna leant back against a tree and laughed till two tears rolled down her cheeks and mixed with the little snowflakes that had stuck there.

"Oh, is it *you*?" she cried. "How perfectly absurd! Why, we must be doomed to kill each other. How shall we try next time?"

He had recovered himself now, and began to see the fun as well as the freshness of the situation.

"What on earth were you doing?" he asked. "How could you know that I should be coming along here, of all places, at that moment? I call it a base revenge."

"I should be tremendously proud of it, if I had planned it," she said; "but I am sorry to say it was the purest accident. See how evil-doers get punished! And I think I should ask you what you were doing here, trespassing on my land?"

"Your land?" he repeated, more and more puzzled. "Aren't you——? I beg your pardon, but I believe I have forgotten your name."

"My name is Schmidt," said Marna, with much seriousness—"Mrs.—no, I mean Miss—Schmidt, and I keep a little hotel up here."

"Really?" exclaimed the young man, looking at her in great surprise. And then he continued, "I think it was at Mrs. Carter's dance——"

"That you endangered my life?" said this naughty

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girl. "Just so. You see, I come of respectable people, and Mrs. Carter has been very kind to me. She often recommends my little place to visitors. I have not any just now."

And she looked at him as if she considered his audience at an end. If only he had not had the impertinence to forget her name, she would have kept him for a playfellow as long as the snow lasted, and perhaps even have invited him to lunch afterwards.

But he had no idea of going away. A district where hotels were kept by young women of Marna's speech and appearance must be worth seeing thoroughly. Of course, he reflected, things were different out her in the East, and he found himself staring at a smooth, cold hand, with a remarkably fine ruby ring on it, which appeared to be held out in farewell. Did hotel-keepers usually shake hands with one?

"May I come and look at your—hotel?" he asked, "I have a party of people with me down in Nikko, and I came up to see if there were anything worth visiting here. I should rather like to stop for a day or two; the scenery is so beautiful;—" and he gazed appreciatively at the tops of Marna's pine-trees, which shut in the view on every side.

Miss Schmidt stooped down to brush the snow off her skirt, and replied, only showing him the top of her head:

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"I—I—am sorry—but my rooms are full
mean engaged—just now; but I will show you
garden if you like."

She thought she might concede that much, &
after all, it was pleasant to have somebody to sp
to, even a person who was so rude as to for
names.

CHAPTER III

“WHAT a charming place!” exclaimed Lord Kilmorack, as his companion led him from the wood and paused at the garden gate—a gate made of fine grey pine-twigs bound together, with a row of cone spikes set on top. The gate was low, and, looking over it, the Englishman saw an exquisite bit of landscape gardening stretching away towards the house, which, with its gold-coloured woods and its powderings of snow, stood out gaily against the blue sunshine of the lake and the soft grey and agate of the hills and the sky. The sun was doing his work through light films of mist, and every beam on Marna’s eaves was dropping showers from the melting snow. A group of spring maples close to the porch had already spread out their pale green and wine-coloured leaves, which now, half veiled in snow, caught the sun on their wet surfaces and looked like velvet under ermine. Inside the carved archway hung a bronze bell, with its camphor-wood hammer on a scarlet string; the azaleas of the garden were fluttering off the snow, as if they were swarms of flame-coloured butterflies waiting for flight. Beyond the porch and verandah the screens were pushed back, and Lord Kilmorack saw a long sitting-room flooded with misty sunshine, its crape curtains the same blue as the lake, white fur rugs on the wheat-coloured

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mats, books and flowers everywhere, and the dogs in the foreground sitting up solemnly staring at him.

"It does not look in the least like an hotel," said Lord Kilmorack.

"It was built for a private house," replied Miss Schmidt, with much truth.

"Do you get many people staying up here?" he inquired. "It is much more attractive than Nikko."

Marna had forgotten about Miss Schmidt as she answered:

"Oh, I have a few people in the summer. It is easy to amuse them then; but at this time of year I like to be by myself. It is nice not to have to talk all day."

"You certainly are an original," thought her companion. "I suppose it is more like a boarding-house." Then he said: "I wonder if you could let me have a little bit of lunch?—just a sandwich and a glass of beer, you know. It is a long walk up, and I am frightfully hungry."

Marna glanced round at him with a funny look in her bright eyes, and the dimple became very pronounced as she replied:

"Yes, I can give you some lunch, I *think*. Will you come in?"

Who could turn away a nice quiet young man with such beautiful grey eyes, when the poor thing was really hungry? So Lord Kilmorack sat down on the step while the servant came and wiped the snow off his boots, and then Marna with much

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dignity invited him into the drawing-room. He sank down into a huge cane chair designed for Major de Wesloff's portly form. Marna disappeared to order his lunch.

"This is very jolly," he told himself, "and what a nice girl! She speaks perfect English, with that queer foreign 'r.' It is fresh, distinctly fresh!"

This was the highest commendation in the eyes of the owner of the *Aurora*. As his hostess came back he saw through the doorway into the dining-room beyond; there was a small table set with gleaming silver, flowers, and snowy napery, that linen of the Danish household which is the finest and whitest in the world.

"She does herself very well, anyhow," thought the guest; and then a servant in black silk robes, with the Wesloff crest on back and shoulder, was bringing a scarlet lacquer table, with silver corners, to his right hand and laying it for an elaborate meal.

"Are you sure you would rather have beer?" inquired Miss Schmidt at his elbow, looking down at him with evident amusement. It was a new experience to stand up and talk to a man who was prepared to give orders out of her own armchair.

"Yes, please," said he, jumping up and turning a little redder than before, he could not imagine why.

Miss Schmidt had taken off her jacket, and her pale blue silk shirt was partly hidden under a neat

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bib apron, which she always put on to wash the dogs. It did not hide a very light, shapely figure, and the ruby ring looked huge over the edges of the pocket. She cocked her golden head on one side and smiled, as if she had just heard a very good joke.

"I can give you some nice old Burgundy," she remarked. "It is much more warming than that weak Japanese beer, papa always says."

"Yes, I'll try the Burgundy, please," he replied. "Is your father—— I mean, does Mr. Schmidt live here too?"

"Not just now," she said, turning away and making the bulldog sit up on his hind legs, a thing he hated to do before strangers. Then she produced a key with some ostentation and went off after the wine.

Kilmorack got up and moved round the room, looking at little things here and there—the beautiful old Dutch brass on the writing-table, the piles of new books on one side and old ones on the other, the four or five miniatures in costly frames, in one of which he recognised a certain royal Duchess now travelling in Japan, and he remembered that she had been a Scandinavian Princess. There was a smelling-bottle as big as a pint pot, with a gold top and a crown in rubies. Really, the whole thing was odd in the extreme. Miss Schmidt was a puzzle to which he had no key.

She sent him a perfect little lunch, and left him to

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be waited on by the "boy," to his great relief, as he could not have made up his mind to ask her for the bill. When he handed five dollars to the servant, the latter put them in his sleeve with a profound bow, and regarded the money in the light of an unusually satisfactory present. Lord Kilmorack found the Burgundy very much to his liking, but was anxious to see more of Miss Schmidt. He came out on the verandah to light a cigarette, and found her standing there looking towards the lake.

"It was such a nice lunch!" he said, "and that wine is excellent. Won't you let me engage a room as soon as you have one free?"

"I only take ladies," replied Marna desperately. "We call this place 'The Nunnery,' and, really and truly, if you have had all the—food and the rest you want, I should be so very much obliged if you would go."

"Of course, if you wish it," he said, flushing up above the crooked band of sunburn on his forehead. "I am extremely sorry if I have inconvenienced you. I think you might have spoken sooner."

"The fact is," began Marna, "there has been a little mistake. I said something quite in joke this morning, and you took it seriously."

"I shall not make that mistake again," said Kilmorack, with his head in the air, and his eyes looking as if it would be pleasant to kill somebody. "Good afternoon. I—I—settled—with your servant."

The English term was incomprehensible to Mar-

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na. Before she found her voice he reached the garden gate, and strode away through the wood without turning his head. The girl stood and watched him, longing to run after him and call him back. She was sorry she had been rude—that was what he must have thought her—and now she was sorry that he was gone.

As the ejected peer made his way down the hill, his wrath subsided a little. She had turned him out of the house—there was no doubt about that. As an experience it was "distinctly fresh," but now that he came to think of it, Miss Schmidt's beautiful eyes looked very regretful when she asked him to go, and they had not looked regretful when he had invaded her garden in the morning. What nice eyes they were, exactly like those of his Irish setter, King Tom, who always gazed so reproachfully at him if he brought bad company on board the *Aurora*. Tom's judgment was wonderful. It was based on the sort of scent that the women used, and whether or no the men swore at him when they tumbled over him in the companion way, where he always sat till he had decided on their merits. He had condemned several people whom Kilmorack thought he was going to like, and Tom was always shown to be right in the end.

Girls, when a man really holds you something dearer than his most trusted doggies, you may begin to lift up your heads, for that is the biggest compliment you are ever likely to get. The remembrance

of Tom further softened the heart of Lord Kilmorack, and he wondered to what the young lady had referred in their conversation of the morning, what it could be that he ought not to have taken seriously. Why had he been such a fool as to flare up and lose his temper before he had got the key to the whole attractive mystery? He speculated as to whether she had a kind of missionary sisterhood up there, who would reprimand her for being seen talking to him. No, the surroundings did not suggest that, and Miss Schmidt was too well dressed and well served for a deaconess or a schoolmistress. The question grew fresher and fresher to his apprehension the longer he pondered it, and by the time he had reached the foot of the hill, he had made up his mind to obtain its solution, if he had to stay a year in Japan to do so.

The usual spring torrent of visitors was invading the country, and many of those who were filling the hotels in Nikko felt that they had been exceptionally fortunate in seeing that most lovely spot under the mantle of the snow. Even Miss Betty Mowbray, not sensitive to the beauties of nature as a rule, was so far carried away as to declare it "ripping," even if it did keep her indoors. She and young Simon were having a desultory game on the rather moth-eaten billiard-table when Kilmorack returned. From force of habit he came and sat down to watch them; he was very muddy and tired, for indeed it is a long walk from Nikko to Chuzenji.

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"Hullo, Hughie!" exclaimed Simon, coming towards him and narrowly escaping having one eye put out by the butt of Miss Betty's cue, "you look amazingly dirty! Where did you get to? We could not find you anywhere."

"Did you try?" asked his cousin.

"We did—in vain," said Betty, looking back over her shoulder, having missed her stroke and all but ripped the cloth.

"You are a bad shot," said Kilmorack, meeting her glance, which rested on him indulgently. "I never can understand why women want to knock the table to pieces. There never was a player in petticoats yet."

"You seem to have come back in an exceptionally sweet temper," said Betty, sitting down beside him and pretending to feel his pulse. "My dear little boy, what is it—head, liver—what? Let your friends do something for you."

"Dry up!" exclaimed Kilmorack as unceremoniously as he would have said it to Simon. "You and Simon might invent a new wheeze when you have had all day to think about it."

"Well, to tell you the truth we did," said Betty, "but I don't think you could stand it till after dinner, could he, Frizz?"

Miss Mowbray was all for "chumminess" with *her* men friends. It put the dear boys at their ease, she said.

"Leave him alone," said Simon, "you girls never

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can see when a man is tired. Have a drink, Hughie?"

"Think I will," said Hugh. "Take anything, you two?"

"I'll split a whisky and soda," said Betty, who could take her three fingers valiantly later in the evening.

She perched on the side of the billiard-table to have her little drink, in a pose which had showed off her figure admirably two years ago, but was a trifle young for it now.

Betty Mowbray was really a very young woman, certainly not more than six-and-twenty, and that to-day is what nineteen was in the thirties. Youth is not counted by years now, but by the training in which people keep themselves. Betty's face was fresh enough, a bonny rosy face, round as a moon, with great black eyes, and a scornful little nose, and what Major de Wesloff would have called a "kissable" mouth, very red and generally laughing, showing superb teeth. Her figure was irreclaimably pulled in, but was fairly supple still, and she had feet which were the affliction of all her friends, for no one was ever allowed to overlook them in her presence. What is the use of wearing "fours" unless you cross one knee over the other from morning till night? That was what made Betty seem old. The tiresome perfection of every trick carried the conviction that she must have been showing off for at least twenty years. Nothing was left to the imagination. It was all done every time.

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So now she was balanced on the edge of the billiard-table, one foot stretched down (with a beautiful run of open-work stocking up the leg) to touch the floor, the other crossed over her knee with a careless little kick which showed all the silk and lace fluffiness of a most expensive petticoat. Kilmorack was so tired of that petticoat.

"Don't do that," he said rather crossly: "it is not sportsmanlike. You ruin the table."

"Don't you mind him, Miss Betty," exclaimed a tall, grey-haired man who entered the room at this moment.

He was dressed in a Norfolk jacket and knicker-bockers of a daring check; his stockings were of a still bolder pattern. His eyes looked as if he had just stopped laughing and his handsome countenance was a little redder than mere sunburn could have made it. This was Terence O'Brien, Kilmorack's Irish friend.

Betty smiled at her new supporter. She and Terence were old allies.

"He is simply horrid," she exclaimed. "What did you do with him, to bring him home in such a condition?"

"Do with him?" said O'Brien. "Do with him, did you say? Ask him, ask the black traitor what he did to me."

Kilmorack looked up from his glass with a very long face.

"Oh, I say, Terence," he began, "I am awfully sorry. I quite forgot we started together."

"You see," said Terence triumphantly to the others. "We start off together, this dear boy and myself, for a day's walk to refresh our souls with intelligent intercourse and attractive scenery. Now, Kilmorack, don't you contradict me; you know that was what you proposed. Off we go for an hour or so, as good and happy young men as you'd like to meet, when my friend says to me, 'Terence, you're getting blown. Sit down here and rest, and I'll go on and explore a bit, and don't you stir till I come to fetch you.' He knows I'm not strong on locality—never could tell my right hand from my left—and away he goes like a young goat up the pass, and I sit and repent my sins for two mortal hours, Betty, my dear! Two long, lonely hours I sit, till there isn't a pull in my flask or a whiff in my pipe. Then says I, 'Terence, we must seek the wanderer. Maybe the poor lamb has sprained his ankle or met a lady. We will rescue him, Terence.' More by token he was carrying the cash, and I hadn't a sixpence on me. D'ye perceive the humour of the situation?"

"Poor dear thing!" said Betty. "What a horrid shame!"

"Well, he went on, "I lost two things this day—one was Kilmorack and the other was Terence O'Brien. I wandered into waterfalls and over precipi-

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ipices, and at long last I came out on a bit of level road leading to a lake, with a jewel of a girl staring down it over a fence."

"A girl?" said Betty. "Of course she was a jewel if you saw her. They always are."

"Hold on!" said Terence. "This was a girl, a real one, with eyes like carriage lamps, and golden hair; not a little creature in a sticking-plaster pinafore with no back and front to her, and feet like muffins. I can't say I'm carried off mine by your little black beauties at all. But this young woman was five foot ten on weekdays at the least, and she'd a figure as good as yours, Miss Betty, and a long sight more comfortable to look at, and she was dressed in a skyblue shirt and a ruby ring fit for an empress."

"Nothing else?" said Simon de Fresel in his mournful chaste voice.

"Go on," said Kilmorack uneasily. "Did you speak to this goddess?"

"Did he?" cried Betty. "Did he ever pass a pretty woman yet without telling her what a warm, faithful heart beats in the breast of Terence O'Brien?"

"You're a profane scoffer!" replied Terence. "You've broken mine and you laugh at the chips, you heartless girl! But I did address the young lady, and bedad, she answered politely."

"That's more than she did to me," growled Kilmorack.

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"I asked her," said Terence, with a wink at Betty, "if she had seen a most remarkably handsome young man pass that way, with the coronet of genius on his noble brow and Lovat mixture clothing the rest of his person."

"And — her reply?" asked Simon, smiling faintly.

"The fire of my language puzzled her a bit at the start," said Terence, "and I have my doubts as to the poetry of that woman's soul, for in a minute she said she had seen a young man with a red face and a big nose go down the hill looking mighty cross."

"Confound somebody's cheek!" exclaimed Kilmorack.

"Of course," continued his friend, "I couldn't deny your commanding profile, Kilmorack. Why heaven that made you a baron bestowed such a bridge on a nose that wasn't meant for a duke's, is one of the things that prove the limited powers of human reason. But to my tale. I said, 'Well, now, why didn't I meet him, then? I've been climbing that blessed hill ever since breakfast-time, and my lunch has gone down it with him.' 'You're hungry?' says that angel in the blue shirt. 'I am that,' says I. 'You never spoke a truer word.' 'Sit down,' says she; 'I'll send you something,' and doesn't she open her gate and make me sit down on a bench, and off she goes, and in two minutes back she comes with a servant and a tray, and she says to the boy,

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'Get the Burgundy that you opened just now,' and by all the goats in Kerry (and that's a hairy oath) she gave me a bottle of wine and a bird that you couldn't beat at Prince's. And while I'm appreciating it, she says, 'And are you a friend of the gentleman that's so sunburnt? Tell me about him. He had a very interesting face.' And that was you, ye ungrateful Hielander, and I returned good for evil and told her what a jewel of a boy ye are—when ye're not cross."

"Did she say—anything?" inquired Kilmorack, quite passing over Terence's cheerful insults.

"Not much—she made me spell your name from beginning to end—Hugh Rose of Kilmorack—and she said it sounded like a fairy tale, and then I told her about the *Aurora*, and Miss Betty here and all the rest of it. And then she seemed to have had enough, and she said 'Good morning' very stiff and dignified, and I came home."

"You are an old chatterbox, Terence," said Kilmorack, rising. "There goes that horrible bell. I suppose we must scrape off a little of the mud before we go in to dinner," and he left the room.

"I think," said Simon, looking at the others, "I really think we may say it is a case. Miss Betty, you are distinctly superseded in two hearts by that young woman in the blue shirt. Please be very nice to me now."

"I am always nice to you, Frizz; nobody could be anything else. Your collars fit so beautifully! Oh,

come along, there goes the Duchess. I must see how her hair is done."

Betty flew out into the corridor just in time to see two women in serge travelling dresses pass through the door of a private dining-room kept for distinguished visitors. The one who entered first was middle-aged, with a pleasant face and light hair, and the unmistakable air which the Royalties still monopolise, even in these democratic days. I think it comes from their having better manners than other people. The lady's companion followed her, and then three gentlemen who had been waiting for them, and the door closed. For the last twenty-four hours Betty had been devising plans for getting introduced to the Duchess of Friedland, and none had succeeded as yet.

Betty's mother now came down with the rest of the party, and they took possession of their table in the gaunt dining-room without waiting for Kil-morack and Terence. There were a few guests at the other tables, quiet people from the Ports or the Legations, who were much amused by the *Aurora* party, and also a little disappointed because no scandal of any kind seemed connected with it, though at first sight it looked as if it ought to produce a nice crop. A Frenchman at a small table pronounced Mrs. Dalton Mowbray "*une belle ruine*," but declared that Miss Betty was "*une beauté*," and Lady Cecilia "*la distinction même*."

It was an odd-looking party, for none of the men

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would submit to dressing for dinner at these altitudes, and none of the women would forego it. Lady Cecilia Ansell contented herself with a *table d'hôte* foulard, but Mrs. Mowbray was gorgeous in black lace, and paste buttons and diamond arrows, while Betty had matched her cheeks with a pink velvet blouse, much cut out over some lace which was supposed to cover her plump pretty neck. She sat down beside Kilmorack's empty seat, in the place which should have belonged to her betters, and Lady Cecilia had to take Mr. Brandon, whom she disliked, for a neighbour, since the other wing of the Mowbray contingent had come up and occupied the left side. Mr. Ansell, a dull, rich man, seemed to think he had done all that could be asked of him when he succeeded in marrying a lady, and he never took much notice of her afterwards. He was really interested in scientific questions connected with his great mining properties, and on those points was not dull. But nobody else cared about such subjects, and he had misgivings as to whether his smart wife and her friends would not despise him for being so extremely well informed upon them. He knew exactly why he had been invited to join the party. It was hoped that he would be induced, under the mellowing influence of the Eastern sunshine, to set the dear boy Simon on his legs again. He thought it very likely that he would consent in the end, but was putting off the evil day as long as possible. Lough

Brandon, the journalist, was writing a book on Japan, and thought he was seeing the country.

Kilmorack paused as he reached the door of the dining-hall, and turned to Terence, who was accompanying him.

"Terence," he said sternly, "if you say one word beyond what I have authorised about Miss Schmidt and her hotel to this crowd, do you know how I shall punish you? I shall leave you here in Japan with them, and go home alone. Now you are warned."

"And if you did that," replied Terence, "it isn't alone you'd be at all, at all, my dear young friend, for by this and by that and the look of you and her, Miss Schmidt and her blue shirt would be on board. Oh, let's hope there's something decent for dinner!"

Kilmorack had foreseen that, after hearing Terence's story, the rest of his party would be full of curiosity about the girl whom it described. He did not like to think that that nice quiet Miss Schmidt, who had formed such a sensible opinion about himself, should be subjected to a visit from Simon and Betty, for the latter was much too enterprising to miss an object for a *tête-à-tête* walk with a dear boy. Nor did he want silly conjectures as to who the girl might be. So he told Terence her name, and that she kept a small boarding-house, for ladies, apparently. That was what he had found out about her.

"It must be a fairly remunerative pursuit," Ter-

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ence remarked drily. "They don't seem to make such a good thing out of it down here, do they?"

And that was the moment when they arrived at the dining-room door. The evening post had just come up from the station, and Betty had made the waiter hand it over to her to be distributed. Her eyes were brighter than ever when she sent the letters and papers round the table, reserving for herself one large square envelope, of whose superscription Mrs. Mowbray tried to catch a glimpse in vain. It did not go into Betty's pocket, as modern girls do not wear pockets, but it was pushed in between her tight satin waistbelt and the pink blouse, and if it heard anything, it would have heard a quite honest commotion in the heart which they covered. "Dear old boy, fancy his writing again!" so ran Betty's thoughts. "Oh, if only the impossible could happen and there was something for us to marry on!" Then aloud she said:

"Well, Lord Kilmorack, did O'Brien give you your soothing powder? *No nursery should be without it.*"

CHAPTER IV

TERENCE in the afternoon was a cheery creature, with plenty of good sense and even a certain amount of reticence at his friends' command; Terence in the evening was apt to be a trifle noisy in his gaiety, until he was overcome by tender regrets and somewhat compromising reminiscences. At such times the exquisite pathos of life appealed to him so strongly that his generous soul longed to share it with others. The borderland between these two states furnished the grand old story of the man who went to the wrong funeral, and the companion tale of how his friend "Fi'ger'ld" eluded the bailiffs in the year of the great snowstorm. These classics, dear to his audience, never palled, and made people laugh even if they were inclined to be seasick—a great point on board a yacht. As I have said before, Kilmorack took them into consideration before bringing O'Brien to sea.

After dinner on this particular evening, Kilmorack, who had resented Betty's usurpation of Lady Cecilia's seat, pointedly asked this lady to come and play billiards with him. Ansell and Brandon joined them, and the rest of the party gathered round the fire and wondered what they could do with themselves till nine o'clock. At that time baccarat always

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set in and kept them good and happy till bedtime. Lady Cecilia had tried in vain to teach her husband that good taste required him to lose on these occasions, but he stoutly refused.

"I play as well as they do," he said, "and a good deal more honestly! Hanged if I'll look like a fool to please anybody!"

The moment Kilmorack disappeared, Simon and Betty questioned Terence pitilessly as to what he had been able to discover about the little romance, and, the first drinks of the evening having been brought, Terence's fortitude gave way, and he told all he knew, and some things that he guessed. Mrs. Mowbray, who was reading a paper with her back to the others, slipped her unacknowledged glasses into her pocket and turned to ask what they were all laughing about.

"Our incorruptible Kilmorack, mother," said Miss Betty. "He has found, or founded, a charming little villa and a charming young woman up in the hills. She stands at the gate and offers hospitality to handsome Irishmen, doesn't she, Terence? Do you think she would let me in if I took Simon with me? Is he good-looking enough? What do you say?"

"We can but try," said De Fresel. "If we could get such a lunch as Terence described, that female boarding-house must be worth exploring."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray. "I know exactly the sort of place. All missionaries and sham converts, and antimacassars at robbers'

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prices for sale to help the good cause. I'm too poor to indulge in those luxuries, Betty."

"Darling mother," said Betty, opening her black eyes very wide, "who ever accused you of indulging in anything that had to be paid for?"

This was a little return for Mrs. Mowbray's attempt at reading the address on her letter.

"Ah, Mrs. Mowbray," said Terence, who was getting to the dreamy stage sooner than usual this evening, "you are too warm-hearted not to have paid bitterly for many things. What does that pretty child know of the terrible realities of life? It's you and me, dear lady, who can look back and count our footsteps by tears—tears of blood. Did I ever tell ye about that sweet girl in Allahabad——?"

"Oh yes, ever so often, Mr. O'Brien," replied Mrs. Mowbray hurriedly, "and really, you know, you must not tell those stories before Betty. She is a young girl!"

"Now it is very strange," said Terence, sinking into a seat beside Mrs. Mowbray, while Betty and Simon put their heads together and wandered off, murmuring confidences, "I never can recollect that; —Miss Betty always seems to me more like a married woman than yourself, and upon my word, only a very little younger. She makes as much noise with her silk skirts as if she'd been married twice over. Just listen to her now—swish, swash, swish, swash. You could tell the price of that petticoat by the rustle of it."

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"She does move noisily," said Mrs. Mowbray, who was not above being a little jealous of her handsome daughter.

"Now you," Terence went on, looking devoutly into his companion's face, and saying what he always said to some woman about this hour, "you are all gentleness, all womanly softness. You could hold a broken heart in your fair fingers without hurting it, and there'd be healing in your touch. Ah, don't go away, now," for here Mrs. Mowbray made a move as if to rise and cut short the threnody which she knew pretty well by this time. "Let me unburden my weary soul on your bosom. I loved a woman once, and you remind me of her. Sweet stabs of memory, how unconsciously you inflict them!"

"Was she pretty?" asked Mrs. Mowbray, pinning her lace straight and shaking a crumb off her frock.

"Beautiful!" he moaned—"a Pe—ri. So like you. And, ah! that sweet little girl that was mine, mine, you understand, my dear friend, and I never could print a fatherly kiss on that child's chaste brow. I could never take her in my strong arms, and say, 'My daughter.' Oh, the ag'ny of it! I've lived my life, but it's been the death of me more than once."

"And what became of her?" inquired the lady, who, looking at the clock, saw that it was nearly nine, and thought she might as well let him run on, since it made him so happy.

"I can't say," said he. "The waves close over us, and the ocean roars, and our dear ones are carried

away. I couldn't recollect the name if I tried, and that's against finding her out. It was a dream. Let it remain the solace of my lonely age."

"Come along," said Mrs. Mowbray, jumping up, "there are the others. Where are the counters?"

The baccarat went gaily on till twelve. Kilmorack lost, and Mrs. Mowbray won a good deal; she went off to bed feeling so young and happy that she could have found it in her heart to forgive her divorced husband all her own sins against him, if he had turned up at that moment. Betty also went to her room, but soon came out to the closed-in verandah, and walked to the far end of it, where De Fresel was waiting for her. There she sat down on two chairs, feet well crossed on one, more open-work stocking showing, and a dream of a dressing-gown falling carelessly away from the eternal petticoat, and even a little from a small satin thing with bows in it, which, as the advertisements indicated, lengthened the waist by two inches without costing pain. The subjugation of Simon was as complete as it was intended to be, for he was too young yet to be weary of the tricks of the drill. He knew, indeed, that Betty was only amusing herself, but though there was no chance for him, he always took what solace might be procured for his losses, at least.

Betty's calculations and attacks, her poses and her piques, were merely a part of her uniform; she had to wear it, like all the other paupers in the social

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union who are condemned to beg their maintenance in a decent official way. But when she could drop it, and there was nobody to pirouette for, she was a warm-hearted, honest girl, who would and could do a good deal for anybody whom, to use her own language, she elevated to the dignity of a "pal."

She was a gentleman's daughter, at least, and some of the paternal qualities were very well entrenched behind her flippant, careless exterior. She had a little story of her own, with some pathetic sides to it, though she insisted on regarding them as merely funny. Three or four years before, she had, after endless trouble on her mother's part, become engaged to a man who was an excellent match in many ways; he was young, and well-off, kind, and "straight." His sporting tastes made him popular with a good class of men; but unfortunately he had too many of them. He had a racing stable, and honestly backed and ran his own horses; he played high as well, and never refused to lend money if he had it, or his name to a friend's bill if he had none. So one morning Harry Winstanley woke up to find himself definitely ruined.

He came to Betty with a very long face, and told her what had happened. She gave him a severe scolding for his folly, and then threw her arms round his neck and declared that she did not care, she meant to marry him all the same. They would pull it off, somehow, she was sure. But Harry said he would not take it; it would be years before he

could give her a decent home, and he would not let her sacrifice her youth in waiting for what might never come.

"All right," the young lady had replied, "if you don't want me to trust you, of course I shall not bother to do it." And then they parted in some anger. Harry disappeared; she heard later that he was working in an Irish training stable, and, seeing that her life lay before her, she set herself, very half-heartedly, to marry Kilmorack. That was turning out to be a slow and difficult task, and when the post brought her a letter in the Nikko hotel, she was weary of the whole thing. The letter, which she brought when she came out to talk to Simon, ran thus:

"**DARLING BETTY**,—You are not married yet, are you? Because if not, I want you to give me a show. It is like this. I have had God's own luck, my dear, and Mr. le Pareilleur, whose Miss Betty got home in such grand style at Aintree, is me, with fifty thousand pounds in my pocket, and the next steamer to this will bring me out to marry you in Japan if you will have me, for you know it was only the being so absolutely 'stony' that ever made me give you up. I could not have taken you to the Irish training stable, where I have made my eternal fortune, could I, now? It was there I picked up this other Miss Betty,—God bless her!—for twenty pounds off a farmer that took a fancy to a Winches-

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ter I had. I paid him half with the rifle and half with a bull-pup, a perfect beauty, and this morning I sent him a hundred pounds as a tip. I trained Miss Betty myself, and Jim Turner got home on her when even the stable would not back her. You should have seen the faces in the Ring that day. Nobody cheered but I and the groom. Now, dearest old girl, it is you and me against the field, and if you will stand by me, we'll pound the lot. We can get our little affair fixed up at a Consulate or something, and I am bringing the ring, a solid hoop—diamonds every one. Do you think I'd marry *you* with a bit of common gold when I've waited two years for you? Betty, I have been straight to you all along, and if I cannot have you, I'll never marry anybody else. I do want to see your dear pretty face again.

“Your own

“HARRY.”

Betty's eyes were shining in the dark when she came out to tell her news to Simon, who was generous enough to rejoice with her, being by this time resigned to the hopelessness of his own case. Meanwhile, another set of confidences was being exchanged in Kilmorack's room between him and Terence, the latter quite sobered by having to defend himself against Mrs. Mowbray at baccarat. Kilmorack had revolted at the lady's shameless cheating.

“It is simply sickening,” he said, sitting on the

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edge of his table *à la* Betty, and balancing a glass in his hand. "I board and lodge them for six months and give them a chance to make friends with a millionaire (Ansell is an awfully good-hearted chap when you know him) and they insult his wife, and the mother cheats us all round, and the girl cheeks me about my nose and pats me on the back afterwards. I won't stand it, Terence, I tell you, fairly. Betty is getting altogether too chummy for me. You must invent a pretext to break up the party. I'll keep you and Simon, and the rest must go home by steamer. I'd like to make them go steerage."

"You are over-excited, Kilmorack," said the indulgent Terence. "The old woman cheats like Satan, I'll grant that, but the girl is a good girl. There's not a bit of malice in Betty, and all her teasing only means that she likes you, you thankless boy."

"Well, I don't like it," said Kilmorack, putting the tumbler down on the table behind him with great decision; "it is like having a dog sitting up on its hind legs at you all through dinner. Unless you throw it some scraps, you feel like a brute, but it has no business to be there, all the same. Betty wants two compliments before the roast and a thumping big one with the dessert. She always gets ready for a declaration over the coffee, but it hasn't come along yet, and it will not, if I can only keep sober. Take them *all* away, my Terence, there's a kind soul. I'll pay you five hundred down if you will, and all your

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expenses. I am a tired man, and upon my word I cannot stand any more patent leather shoes and silk skirts."

"I'd say 'Done with you,' if you would show me how to start," said Terence, with longing in his voice, for he saw that Kilmorack was in earnest. "But do you know now," he went on, "I don't recollect quarrelling with a party before. I've always limited my attentions to individuals."

"Five hundred," repeated Kilmorack, "and no responsibility with me. I could only make it half if I had to furnish you with the idea. I am sure you will find something—something quite nice and pleasant, of course, for I don't mean to do anything unkind or uncivil, and the Mowbrays must not be put to expense—you quite understand?"

"I understand," said Terence, "and will do my best just to please you, Kilmorack. You back me up in everything I tell them, that's all."

"Right!" said Kilmorack; "I daresay my character will survive."

"Perhaps," Terence said slowly, and gazing at the ceiling, "I may have to sacrifice one character besides your stainless one. I presume you'll have no objection?"

"Sacrifice twenty imaginary ones if you like," laughed Kilmorack. "Don't get me into a libel case, that is all. Anything else will come out in the wash."

"It was ever the custom of great men to snatch

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an hour's sleep before a conflict," said Terence, with a yawn. "I will refresh my spirit before initiating my Napoleonic task. Good-night, my noble boy. You will make it cash?"

"I will that," replied Kilmorack, imitating his ever-green accent. "You are a man of heart, Terence, and I could almost forgive the Irish Members for your sake. Good-night."

During the two days that followed, Mr. O'Brien was observed to be more thoughtful than usual. He avoided Mrs. Mowbray, and took Lady Cecilia for the confidante of his woes for two evenings running. During the daytime the excellent guide engaged for the party showed them some of the most beautiful things in the world, but beyond a word or two of weary praise he could elicit very little appreciation of the wonders of Nikko. On the other hand, Lord Kilmorack spent lavishly for himself and his party, and Katsu was making a golden harvest off the bills.

Other visitors there were, not so ignorant of Marna de Wesloff's existence as the ones who had begged her hospitality. She got a little note one morning from Madame de Behr, the second lady in the quiet royal party, saying that the Duchess of Friedland, having kept an affectionate remembrance of Madame de Wesloff, would come and rest at Miss de Wesloff's house on her way to Chuzenji, in order to see the daughter of her old friend. Marna hurriedly put everything in order, dressed her dogs in their

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best collars, and herself in a clean frock, and came half-way down the hill to meet her distinguished visitor. She looked so pretty and lonely that the Duchess opened her arms to her, and drew her out to talk a little of herself, which Marna was glad to do after these days of solitude. She also found a wave of homesickness swelling up in her heart at the sound of the home language, at the sight of her countrywoman's kind face and blue eyes, and she suddenly felt that it was a mistake to expatriate oneself for ever, that she would rather be a peasant in Denmark than a princess in Japan.

"You are on the wrong track, my child," said the Duchess, when Marna had offered her all she had of hospitality, and the rest of the party had pulled out on the lake, seeing that her Highness seemed to desire to be left alone with the girl—"quite the wrong track," and she smiled down into Marna's eyes, upturned to her face, as she sat on the low verandah steps.

"How the wrong track, madame?" asked Marna, smiling back. "I did not think I was on any track. That is what makes me miserable. Here I am, twenty-two, and absolutely nothing done. It is depressing."

"But what is that you want to do?" insisted the Duchess. "Tell me, and perhaps I can help you."

"Well, madame, I will try," said the young girl, "and indeed it is so good of your Highness to care."

"I cared a great deal for your mother, my dear,"

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replied her friend, "and she helped me in troubles of my own."

A sad memory clouded the kind blue eyes for a moment. The Duchess of Friedland was not beautiful or young, but the moment one looked at her one felt that she was wise and sweet and very true.

"Are they over, madame?" asked Marna quickly.

"The pain of them is, my dear. Troubles are a little like nettles. If you handle them timidly, they sting a dozen times over. If you grasp them once tight and fast, it only hurts once, and that is soon over. You have no troubles, have you?" she asked.

"Oh, I have enormous troubles," said Marna, in right good faith; "two kinds—outside ones and inside ones. The outside ones are all Mrs. Adair. I know my father wants to marry her, and I will not have it."

"Why not?" asked the Duchess calmly.

Marna was so surprised by the question that she sat looking before her with an expression of bewilderment.

"I really don't know, madame, except that I do not like her, or admire her, or trust her," she replied at last.

"But you are not marrying her," remarked the Duchess. "Is there anything against her? Is she not a nice person?"

"If she were the nicest person in the world," cried Marna, "how could I like her? she is trying to come

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into my poor little mother's place! He has no right to bring her there, or to ask me to stand it." Marna was flushed, and her lip quivered as she spoke.

The Duchess did not answer for a minute. She laid her hand on the girl's hair and looked out over the quiet lake, with its contented ripples and dreamy surrounding hills.

"Mädi," she said at last (and Marna looked up quickly at the old nursery word), "I am going to tell you a story that was told to me when I was a child. It must be ever so long since you heard one. It happened one winter, far away in the North, that one of the snow-children got forgotten when Flieder Mütterchen called all the others home. She had drifted into a little dell where the sun came only late in the year, and there she lay on the brown earth when not a single snow-wreath was left anywhere else in the woods. She lay very still, for fear that somebody should be sent after her, and she said to herself, 'This is famous; now I shall see just how everything is done to prepare for us when we are not here.' For the snow-children are very curious, and go scurrying into nooks and crannies as fast as they can, because they are allowed out only for a time, and all the rest of the year they talk over what they have seen, and they think the round world is all got ready just for them to lie on. Flieder Mütterchen, who sits under the elder-tree, always calls them in before they have found out even what the violets are going to look like, and

as for lilies and roses, of course they do not believe in them at all, because they have never seen them. They think all the gardens are made for snow-flowers only. Well, this snow-child had a grand time when the little cold flowers began to come up round her and stare at her in amazement. 'What are you doing here?' they asked. 'This ground belongs to us; we want to plant a great deal of seed this year.' 'Very well,' said the snow-child, 'I will watch you. After all, it is for me you are working.'

"But everything they did seemed quite absurd to her. When they sent up first shoots and then flowers, and then after many days got a little pod of seed ready, she rated them for their slow ways. 'Make haste!' she cried. 'The sun is coming, and he will melt you before you have time to plant your seed.' And they laughed and said, 'Little snow-child, the sun that will melt you increases us. Fancy being afraid of the sun!' And little by little she came to understand that she knew hardly anything of the other creatures' ways, and the world was not made for snow-flowers, but for thousands and thousands of big strong plants that want light and heat; and that people prize these far more than a little white snow-wreath that can only help the earth by melting into it, and taking its share of nourishing all the rest. And when Flieder Mütterchen saw that she had stayed so long as to learn a little sense, she begged the sun to spare her longer still till she could turn her into a dear live Danish girl, which

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she did in time. But Mädi must not go about with snow in her eyes and think the whole world is made for her alone."

The gentle voice ceased. It had stirred all the memories of childhood with its simple words in the loved mother-tongue, and out of those memories, crystal deeps sun-shot with love, a flood of tenderness swept over Marna, and she forgot all her anger with others and her dissatisfaction with herself. Her eyes filled with tears and she put her golden head down against the motherly knee and let them fall one by one without shame. At last she looked up into the Duchess's face.

"How kind and wise you are, madame!" she cried. "I see, I see! Oh, it was so like poor little mother—she always made things look kind . . . and possible. . . . I do miss her so dreadfully!"

"So do I, still," said the Duchess; "she was one in ten thousand. Do not forget her ways and thoughts, my dear. She would not have liked your staying up here all alone. How did your father come to let you do it? You ought to have an older woman—some friend—with you."

"Father didn't know," said Marna, rather shame-facedly. "I had a friend at first, madame, and then she had to go back. . . . I will try to get somebody else . . . if your Highness thinks I ought to."

"I certainly think so," said the Duchess, "and ——" She hesitated a moment, and then continued, "I wish what is impossible, I suppose—that you

could be living among your own people. It seems to me that when Europeans congregate in these distant places, they almost have to make life over again for themselves. All the healthy old traditions that provide such broad, safe roads for them to travel along at home are wanting, and they suffer from losing their prejudices and getting nothing to replace them. However, your duty is here, with your father, at present. Now, call my coolies, and tell them to get my chair ready, for the day is waning, and I must get back to Nikko."

She would not let Marna walk down the hill again, but told her to come the next day but one and lunch with her at the hotel; and as the party disappeared, and Marna had caught the last glimpse of her friend, high on the men's shoulders and turning back to smile at her on the thin-leafed threshold of the woods, she felt that it really was too lonely at Chuzenji, and wondered what she could have been so foolishly cross about when she left her other home.

CHAPTER V.

MAJOR DE WESLOFF was sauntering down the Bund towards the club at twelve o'clock. It was a lovely morning, and the harbour, full of steamers and warships at anchor, with sampans flying backwards and forwards like brown shuttles over the dancing blue, made a gay and pretty sight. It is not Japan at all, for all the buildings that face the sea are purely European, and the coolies and jin-rik-sha men alone proclaim the strand to be that of Dai Nihon; but it is fresh and inspiriting, and at any rate represents a very important link in the chain that draws East and West together for their mutual good.

On the club steps two or three men were lingering before going to lunch; it is a twelve o'clock meal and they call it "tiffin," and prepare for it with cocktails of weird strength and savour. Willie Barnes, looking rather ill, jumped down two steps and greeted the new-comer with enthusiasm.

"You don't look well, Willie," said the kindly Major. "What is wrong? Been losing again?" Willie had a nice taste in cards.

"No, no; not this time," said the youth. "I really got to be dearly last night. Such a jolly dinner-party at Mrs. Hayes's, and we danced afterwards.

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It was too bad of her not to bring Miss Marna back from the hills! We missed her dreadfully."

"Mrs. Hayes? When did she get back?" asked Major de Wesloff, looking surprised.

"Oh, a day or two ago, I think," Willie replied. "She said it was dreadfully cold up at Chuzenji. All the travellers are snowed up in the hotels at Nikko, I hear. But this sun will free them to-day."

The major seemed very much annoyed.

"I will run up and see Mrs. Hayes after lunch," he said. "I fancy she only came down to her dinner-party and meant to go right back again. My daughter would not be staying there alone."

"Come and let me mix a 'prairie oyster' for you," said Willie, as they entered the bar together; "I'm going to have one to get up my appetite. I've had four cocktails this morning already, and they haven't done it a bit of good."

"My dear young friend," said the older man solemnly, "if you take four cocktails before tiffin for a few weeks more, you will be invalided home with a bad pain in your right side, and you will tell your kind friends there that the climate of Japan did not suit you. Be warned in time."

"Oh, I am all right," replied Willie confidently. "Now, a glass of Worcester sauce, a spoonful of pepper, two raw eggs—here we are!"

He mixed the satanic draught with much care, and held it out to Major de Wesloff with an encouraging smile.

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"Not for worlds!" exclaimed that wise man. "They did not give us cast-iron linings when *I* was born!"

Willie tossed it off at a gulp, and tried hard not to show the tears it brought into his poor eyes.

"Have you anything you want taken up to Chuzenji?" he asked, as soon as he could speak. "Mr. Morton is letting me have my Easter holiday now instead of later, and I think of running up to Nikko for a few days."

"I daresay you do," said Major de Wesloff, laughing, for Willie's adoration of Marna was an open secret, "and I am much obliged for your kind offer, but I am going up myself, so I need not trouble you with commissions."

It is needless to say that the idea of visiting his daughter had been formed on the spot. The meeting promised to provide her with the scolding she deserved. But it was too late to catch a train that day, and in any case he wished to see Mrs. Hayes first. Perhaps she was really going back; indeed, he hoped so, for it was inconvenient for him to leave the Consulate just now.

He climbed the hill to Mrs. Hayes's pretty villa early in the afternoon, and his approach, watched from the window, inspired that cheerful little lady with something like panic.

"What am I to say to him?" she wailed, turning to Willie, who had reached the spot first, and warned her of his visit. "Is it my fault if he quarrels with

his daughter? I shall have to tell him a fib, or else go back on poor Marna. I can't do that, so it will have to be the fib. Mind you look as if you, at least, could believe me, Willie. Nobody ever does when I tell untruths—I am such a bad hand at lying."

"Say the friend was to arrive that evening," whispered Willie hurriedly, for the Major's sounding footstep was in the hall. "I want to have a little fun with Miss Marna—not five thousand heavy fathers to do the civil to. Here he comes."

Mrs. Hayes was all rippling smiles by the time the major entered her room, and it was evident that she underrated her own powers. How good of him to come, she exclaimed, and she *had* enjoyed her little visit so much! It was too horrid having to come away and leave dear Marna so soon, but she was only to be alone for a few hours, as her friend was coming up from Nikko that evening. Who? Oh—oh—a Danish friend, Miss something—Mrs. Hayes never could remember those queer names.

Major de Wesloff heaved a sigh of relief. That was all right, then, and he need not leave his affairs to take care of themselves, or his affianced bride to mourn his absence. For only last evening Mrs. Adair had consented to be his, with one quite proper little proviso—that Marna should give her consent. She liked the handsome Major very truly, but not enough to fight daily battles with another woman for the possession of him. So now the Major thought he would make a bold stroke and enlist Mrs.

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Hayes as an ally. Her influence with Marna might help him.

"Dear lady," he began, "you set my mind at rest. When that boy," and he nodded forgivingly at Willie, "told me you had come back, I thought my girl was up there alone, and of course that would not be quite the right thing, would it? She is the most harum-scarum creature, and always wants somebody to keep her in order. I wonder who the friend is? Can you really not remember?"

"Oh—somebody she knew at home, I suppose," Mrs. Hayes replied quickly. "There are so many visitors in Nikko this year. Won't you smoke?" and she offered him a cigarette to change the subject.

At last Willie went, promising to come back in the evening and fetch some small parcel that Mrs. Hayes wished to send up to her friend, and the Major felt that the time for his confidences had come. Mrs. Hayes was quite equal to receiving these alone. She was a sensible little woman, and even her short married life had taught her the gentle lesson which the Duchess had tried to show Marna in her fairytale, namely, that the world of men and women cannot be reduced to an *album pour la jeunesse*, with everything arranged to meet the views of the omnipresent "young person." The Major was not only Marna's father, but he was also a jolly, home-loving man, who, if he had been a Mahometan, would have had several wives and have been extremely nice to

them all. Why should he be deprived of one, when there was no obstacle to his marriage with a suitable person? So when he went away, Mrs. Hayes promised to write to his daughter and prepare her mind for the news of his engagement.

It was a difficult letter to write, because she had openly sympathised with the views which she was now attempting to modify.

There is a subtlety well known to the repentant and converted statesman, when, "ratting" from the vanquished to join the victorious party, he tries to persuade us that the side of his coat which we now behold is merely the one which has always been closest to his heart and therefore hidden from our eyes. But his methods are elementary compared to the delicate chain of reasoning, reaching back beyond our memory and on beyond our ken, which a clever woman suddenly unfolds when she has been cajoled or frightened into changing her mind. She generally succeeds in the most important part of her task, which is to convince herself. The rest is child's play; somebody is sure to believe her in the end, and one ally to her is the cipher which multiplies the unit by ten.

So when Willie Barnes came back, there was a kind, motherly letter all ready for him to take up to Marna in the mountains, together with two pairs of gloves, a bottle of benzine, and a pound of mixed sweets, for both Mrs. Hayes and Marna still found much companionship in bonbons. The young pirate

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decided privately to offer these last as his own gift, and promised Mrs. Hayes to support her advice with all the eloquence at his command. He was also to beg Marna at once to materialize the "friend" who so far only existed in imagination. When he was gone, Mrs. Hayes found time to wonder why on earth she had taken so much trouble to smooth things out for Mrs Adair, a person who always made her feel newly arrived and insignificant—these being synonyms in Port English.

Unfortunately Mrs. Adair had felt expansive and generous after her little love scene the evening before, and without consulting anything but her mood of the moment, wrote a rather gushing note to Marna herself. In it she not only opened her arms, so to speak, when all she could have hoped to get was a fairly polite bow, but she expatiated on the Major's noble character, commanding intellect, and warm heart, as if she were giving him a letter of introduction to his daughter. When outsiders do this, it naturally implies that we have not shown sufficient appreciation of our domestic jewel, and that they know a good deal more of it than we do; and the impertinence is all the more intolerable because it is generally inflicted when we have just seen fit to quarrel with our blessings. So by the time Marna's admirer reached her feet, all the Duchess's good work seemed to be undone; and although only twenty-four hours had passed since her little lesson

was administered, the poor girl had worked herself up into another fit of rage at Mrs. Adair, her existence, her colouring, her gush, and her handwriting, where the curly capitals and slanting "a's" indicated, as Marna felt convinced, a combination of tiger and serpent in the character.

This, when she came to think of it, would have resembled a dragon, and dragons were connected with another worry that day. One of the ornaments in her drawing-room was a beautiful carving of a dragon, five clawed, fire breathing, winding his armoured length through whirls of cloud and spray. When Marna's cook came after breakfast to get his orders for her simple meals, he was in a state of gentle intoxication. Amused but benevolent, Marna pretended to take no notice, and he got out his ideas about "differing" fairly well.

"That is all right for tiffin," said the young mistress, trying to fix his wandering eye. "Now, Narataké—look at me when I speak to you—what can you get for dinner? I want a proper roast, not cow-steak or old hen."

Narataké got one eye moored on Marna's countenance, and the other went wandering round the room for suggestions. His glance landed on the dragon, and then his face lighted up. He could not remember the creature's market name, but its form was pleasantly familiar.

"All same *that!*" he exclaimed, pointing to the

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carving, "plenty in Nikko. My cook him spatchcock, toast, sossolandaishi! My think Missie very much like!"

Half an hour later, Rep was missing, and Narataké was found carrying him into the back kitchen, with a glare in his eyes which seemed to indicate that he had momentarily mistaken the pampered mongrel for the beast he was to cook "spatchcock on toast;" so Marna thought it prudent to hand him over to the helpful little policeman, to be locked up until he was in a condition to realise what docking his wages meant.

"It is lucky it did not happen the day the Duchess came," thought Marna. "I shall get along on bread and jam and the tinned things. Oh, dear, this is getting very dull! I wish somebody would come along to play with."

So Willie and the bonbons appeared at exactly the right moment, and met with a cordial reception. Marna was standing on the verandah, with Rep tucked under one arm, when the bamboo gate opened and the young man walked up the path. It was fortunate that he had no illusions about Marna's feeling for him, or he might have misinterpreted the little "Hullo!" of pure pleasure with which he was greeted as she dashed down the steps and ran to meet him, while Rep yapped joyously and the other dogs came prancing round, adding mightily to the noise. Dogs have their own names for people. Willie was the man who threw tennis-balls for you

to run after and let you chew them up afterwards. Of course you were glad to see him.

"You are clever, Willie," said Marna; "I was just wishing somebody would turn up. A letter from Mrs. Hayes? I will read it later. Come in now and tell me all the news."

"There isn't any when you are away," replied Willie boldly. "Life is insupportable down there without you; that is why I came up here."

"Willie," said Marna, "I have told you a dozen times that you are to regard me as a friend, or chum, or anything in reason, but *not* as a girl to be made love to. It bores me."

"How can I possibly help it?" he asked rather ruefully. "You are so beautiful, and I——"

"Willie," said Marna very sternly, "if you ever say that again, I shall make a face that I know how to make, which is so awful that you will flee down the hill a gibbering idiot. No intellect could survive it. Now I am going to show you how you ought to behave. For to-day you shall be Miss Barnes, and you will please call me Major de Wesloff. You are going to have a beautiful time!"

"All right!" chuckled Willie. "Fifty to one in chocolate creams you forget first."

"Done with you," said Marna. "If I lose, I pay you one cigarette."

"I'll take it now, please," said Willie, as she entered the house first. "Major de Wesloff, you are not a viceroy—you must not pass before ladies."

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"Here it is! I knew you would win," she answered, holding out a box to him; "but oh, you poor thing, I shall not be able to give you anything to eat! The cook is drunk, and I had to send him to the police-station. What shall we do?"

"Picnic," replied the boy; "it is a lovely day. Let us put what we can find into the boat, and go off to the upper end of the lake. There is a little creek there—don't you remember, you took us up there last summer. Nobody minds bread and cheese in the open air. If you should happen to have a bottle of that splendid Danish cherry brandy, now, that would come in nicely."

"Not till after lunch, Miss Barnes," said Marna, squaring her shoulders, and looking him in the eyes exactly as her father always looked at her when he hoped to succeed in forbidding something. "No morning cocktails in this establishment—for young ladies, anyway."

"Hard lines, Major," said Willie. "You yourself always give me a glass of that cherry brandy before lunch—you know you do."

"That is when there *is* going to be lunch," the lawgiver replied, "not when the cook is in jail and your chief food will be bonbons and a view. We will take all the dogs."

"To eat? Oh, well, if you like. Put in a mackintosh, anyway," said the wise Willie; "something will happen before night."

"How absurd!" exclaimed Marna. "I am much

more likely to want a parasol—there is not a cloud in the sky."

"Only one," replied her friend, "but it is the wrong colour and in the wrong place. Never mind! I will get out the boat."

A favourite simile with religious writers is one about the end of our pilgrimage, when the soul is likened to a boat reaching port, never to put to sea again. In the Street of Tombs in Pompeii, the most beautiful monument shows a tablet in white marble, where a little ship is just coming into the harbour, and all her sails are being furled by winged loves, laughing over their task. But to many people—and to all sea lovers—the ideal of rest and happiness is the sense of being carried out on the buoyant flood, out with fair breezes and sunny or starry skies to the unfeatured blue, where the noisy worries and claims cannot follow, and where, for a time at least, the spirit can be as free as if sea and sky were its own pavilions, unclaimed and untenanted by one rival soul. A little mountain lake is not the ocean, but one may find on it something of that same sense of remoteness and peace.

Marna had slipped her friend's letter into her pocket and did not remember to read it just at first. When she did, Willie was rowing rather close to the shore, at a spot where the pines dipped almost into the water and the strand beneath them was wet grey velvet for a foot or two, and then a thick mat of sweet brown needles and bits of bark, making way

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for green praying carpets of moss just at the trees' feet, as if for any chance worshipper to kneel at ease. The sun came down in flecks and shafts through the laddered branches, and the place was warm and full of insect life in the April noon. For this was April already, the loveliest of months in Japan, will the rain but let you see it.

"Pull in here," said Marna, putting Mrs. Hayes's letter in her pocket quite quietly; "it makes a good place to lunch in."

"Oh, come on to the creek," protested Willie; "it is so jolly there."

"No," said Marna. "I want to talk to these pines. They always make me feel good and reasonable. Houp! Rep, out you go!" and she put him over the side to follow the other dogs who had half swum, half waded ashore.

"What a lucky, lucky creature you are!" said Marna, looking seriously at Willie as he leapt over a yard of shallow water and began to pull the boat up on the sand.

"I know I am, to-day," he cried, "but not always. I shall have to keep off the cards for a month to pay for this. It is quite worth it."

"I did not mean in that way," said the girl; "I meant because you are a man. If I could jump over puddles like that, do you suppose I would care who my father married? I should not have to meet them if he married twenty mauve widows. I could go off by myself and snap my fingers at destiny. They

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might ask us if we wanted to be boys or girls, mightn't they?"

"Girls have much the best time, really," replied Willie. "It is a grind earning one's living. Everything does itself for *you*. And—and—it must be nice to have people care for one. Nobody will ever care for me as I do for you, Miss Marna."

"Miss Barnes," said Marna sternly, "even Major de Wesloff, attractive as he is, is not accustomed to receiving declarations from young ladies. Come, let us unpack our lunch. Do you see what a true friend I am? Here is the cherry brandy."

"I knew you would not have the heart to refuse," exclaimed the boy. "Now let us drink everybody's health. Who shall come first?"

"Strictly limited number admitted?" asked Marna. "Well, let us take enemies and friends alternately. I start—Mrs. Adair. Oh, you are drinking too fast; you must not give more than a sip to each. Now you name a friend while I get another enemy ready."

"Major de Wesloff," exclaimed Willie—"the one that is here, I mean."

"Well, you can't make me put the other one on my list, can you? They are the enemies. I don't think I have any more. What a pity!"

"Oh yes," said Willie, "there's the man who knocked us both down at Mrs. Carter's dance. The *Aurora* man, you know."

"Oh, but he is so nice!" objected Marna. "I could

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not call him an enemy. Besides, I nearly killed him afterwards, so we are quits ;" and she told Willie a little bit of the Kilmorack adventures, just enough to keep him good.

"I couldn't stand him at all," said poor Willie. "I thought he gave himself fearful airs, and you cheated me out of a dance and gave it to him."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Marna, getting very red. "I never did anything of the sort. Oh, what is that?"

A sullen roar of wind travelled through the trees, and a few big drops of rain came down on Marna's bare head.

"It is our cloud," said Willie. "I saw it when we started; but it has grown faster than it had any right to do. We ought to be getting back."

"Typhoon?" asked Marna, leisurely nibbling a macaroon.

"No, it is too soon for that," he replied; "just a tail end of the equinoctial. But it means to blow, all the same. Look out!"

A rotten branch, snapped by the gale, came hurling down between them, and a sheet of rain drove suddenly at them in steely cold lances.

"What on earth shall we do?" asked Marna, laughing, and looking down at her frock, already wet through and dripping.

"Nothing but wait," said her companion. "Come farther into the wood, where it is thicker."

They crept under a slanting hedge, the boy and

the girl and all three of the dogs, and watched the little pine-wood turn into a muddy bog in less than five minutes. The lake at the far end of the wood was hurling itself in real waves on the shore, and the boat had been driven nose foremost on the sand, where she was filling and settling down nicely.

"We shall have to bury the lunch-basket and walk home when this is over," said Marna, watching the calamity from afar. "I don't know the road in the least. I am not even sure that there is one. Cheery, isn't it?"

"Here is the cherry brandy, anyway," said the hopeful Willie, who had brought the precious bottle under his arm. "Besides, I do hope it cannot go on long like this, even in Japan. I feel drowned twice over as it is."

"It all came of drinking Mrs. Adair's health," she replied. "There isn't a grain of good luck connected with that woman. To think that she is sitting up in her best frock smiling at my father this very minute, and he is telling her what a sweet angel she is, and here are you and I, poor lambs, suffering this for just mentioning her name. Rep, where is justice? Speak!"

Poor Rep shivered and whined, and explained that rain had never suited any of his family. Both Marna and her friend began to look dejected, for it was growing darker and the storm showed no sign of abating. The roar of the wind down from the hills was rather terrifying, and the rain, driven before

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it, had found out the party of refugees and biting their faces and penetrating every thread of clothing.

"There is no use in waiting, Willie," said Ma at last. "This is getting worse and worse, and me to go on all night. We had better start to find way home at once."

But it was a long time before they reached a friendly haven, and when they did, there was a little surprise in store for them.

CHAPTER VI

"BETTY, what is the matter with you?" Mrs. Mowbray asked her daughter. "You seem to have quite lost your head, and you are generally so clever at managing people. Kilmorack has gone off in a huff, and no wonder! You couldn't have been ruder if you were coming into fifty thousand a year."

"Don't I look as if I had?" replied Betty. "I am sure I feel so. I suppose it is this lovely day," she added piously. "I am always so subject to the influences of nature."

It was the day on which Willie Barnes reached Marna's retreat in the hills. Betty, in the exuberant sense of coming happiness and freedom inspired by Harry's letter, had mercilessly teased Kilmorack about his "grumpiness," as she called his present mood. At last, goaded out of his patience, he had said something sharp, and thoroughly well deserved, but unfortunate, considering that the reprimanded Betty was his guest. She turned on him with a very angry word (for which he rather respected her), and he took advantage of the incident to disappear for the day, as he often did when there was something that he wanted to see by himself. As he came out on the hotel verandah, he told O'Brien that he should not be back till the evening, and ended by looking him in the face, and saying:

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"Terence, I do not see that you are getting on with the Napoleonic task at all. I shall not consider that you have kept your part of the bargain if you reduce me to behaving like a cad and quarrelling with a lot of women who are my guests. Report progress to-night when I come back."

And off he went, taking the road which led to some of the higher valleys among the hills. Terence looked after him with a puzzled expression on his kind, jolly face. "It is a strange thing," he thought, "that Hughie there, with the world at his feet, frets over the colour of it—wants his football blue, not green, and makes himself miserable accordingly; and there's myself, without a single one of the things he has, so in love with this old universe that I find each minute worth living and am grudging my corpse to my grave worse every day. But he's a dear boy, good luck to 'm!"

"Is that me?" said Simon de Fresel at his elbow, for these last words were spoken aloud.

"You're another," replied Terence; "but the elder brother's blessing was meant for your cousin. He is off for the day again, he says."

"He is not well," said Simon, pulling his fair moustache with a troubled look. "He used to be such a sociable, jolly chap, and now he quarrels with us all, and goes off by himself. I hope he is not getting malaria."

"And is that all you know of the human heart at one-and-twenty, Simon?" asked Terence. "You de-

scribe with striking veracity all the symptoms of a healthy love affair, and then you advise—quinine! Boy, boy, have you never been in love?"

"Not what you would call in love," returned Simon. "You see, Terence, I'm an eclectic—you may well start; I found the word in a magazine, and there's nothing like having a good name for a bad thing."

"What's the disease?" inquired Terence, laughing. "Is it an overstrain of your credit or something you catch on the turf? It is a pretty word, anyway. There seems to be the crack of a whip in it somewhere."

"It means picking and choosing," replied the young man, "and the two subjects you mention are matters of destiny over which the best of us have no control. My discrimination is solely exercised about falling in love. I don't fall in; I climb up, slowly, wondering if it is worth it, all the way. Other people seem to look upon it as a treat, and one feels bound to give it a show, but when you get to the top, ten to one you are disappointed. What is the weather going to do? The women want to be taken somewhere."

Katsu was called and consulted, and the old-fashioned barometer examined, and pronounced "dotty" for pointing to "change" with such a sun shining out of doors; and little by little the energetic ones got ready for a walk, and the lazy ones—Ansell and Lady Cecilia—refused to move. The latter would

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go out after lunch, she said, and Mrs. Mowbray was quite sure that she was waiting for Kilmorack to come back and play billiards with her again. Mr. Brandon had found Katsu very weak in statistics, and had engaged a separate guide for himself—a man who always found a number of some sort whereabouts to answer a question, and with whom the methodical sightseer was "doing" Nikko properly.

So the official expedition was reduced to four—Mrs. Mowbray and Betty, Terence and Simon. The women had litters, and so had Katsu, who loved not walking. Terence slapped Simon on the shoulder, and said:

"We boys will walk, won't we, Simon? I feel I'm losing muscle in this land of litters and handcarts. Have you noticed that the limbs are alternately distributed in Japan?"

"How on earth do you mean?" asked Betty, preparing to double up like a foot rule and crawl into her litter.

"Why, the upper classes have all the arms and the lower ones all the legs. Look at that," and he pointed to a jin-rik-sha man who passed them at full speed, going down the hill. The muscles of the man's legs stood out in colossal lumps as he moved; the hands that held the shafts were absurdly small and fine.

"If it came to fighting——" mused Simon, who saw enlistment in the near future.

"The gentlemen would do the hitting, and the

coolies all the running away?" suggested Betty, taking off her hat and holding it out to Simon. "Put this on my roof, Frizz," she begged; "there's no room for it and me under this box lid. Oh, poor mother! You'll never get in. It was all I could do—and I don't weigh twelve stone," she added under her breath.

Mrs. Mowbray's coolies looked uneasily at the majestic figure which at last settled into place in the hanging basket slung on poles, which they were to carry a matter of eighteen or twenty miles before supper-time. Then a brilliant thought came to one of them, and he claimed the well-known right of drawing lots for the heavy or the light load. A laugh went round as he drew the heavy one again, and then the men fell into place and started off at a swinging trot, steadyng themselves by the long staves they carried, and stopping every few hundred yards to change the pole from one shoulder to the other. European women in their tightly fitting clothes become suddenly conscious of every bit of whalebone or steel which has gone to moulding their shape, and the result of the continued jogging movement is to throw every crease or fold into the wrong place. Japanese costume, perfectly loose everywhere, except round the hips, where pressure gives support, is the only comfortable one for these "kago," or basket, journeys.

As Terence O'Brien tried to keep up with the quick step of the coolies, he was turning over in his

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mind all the possible openings which could be utilised for the stern task that Kilmorack had laid upon him. He had the fertile Irish imagination and real dramatic joy in the making up of a strong and likely story. But the kindly creature could not bear to give pain. All his inventions were intended to interest and amuse his friends, and also, but quite in a secondary degree, to feed his own happy little vanities. He would rather have died than have had to tell Mrs. Mowbray that Kilmorack was tired of her society, and besides, his friend had forbidden all but the most courteous measures. For his own part, Terence could not see that there was much amiss with Mrs. Mowbray, barring the cheating at cards, which he considered ill-judged in the circumstances. As for Betty, he could find no faults in her at all, and was mightily puzzled to understand why Kilmorack made difficulty about flirting with her. "That was all she wanted, poor girl, and wasn't it natural, now?"

O'Brien was quick-sighted enough on some subjects, and he had long ago understood that Betty's pursuit of Hughie was but a half-hearted affair. Her mother was in deadly earnest, but Betty was amusing herself. "All the better," thought O'Brien. "At any rate the girl won't suffer—and she's a good girl, poor Betty. If I had ten thousand a year, I would marry her to-morrow, and take my chances of keeping Mrs. Mowbray's bills in order. But there, I never had anything to offer any woman but myself

when it was young and handsome—at least, a little younger and handsomer than it is now, and I have lived my life. Let us pull poor Kilmorack out of the hole he has got into. I must make up a story about him and that nice pretty girl in the cottage. He said I could do as I liked with a couple of reputations, and she will never know, poor child! 'Mrs. Mowbray,' he said aloud, 'will you not get out and walk a bit? You must be feeling cramped, and the coolies will carry you all the better for a short interval of repose.'

One of the men looked ghastly pale, with purplish streaks round nostrils and mouth.

"Indeed I will," said Mrs. Mowbray. "This is frightfully trying work."

"There'll be something more trying before long, my poor friend," thought Terence, as he deftly helped her to scramble to her feet.

"I do not think I can possibly get in again," she said. "I begin to understand how a calf feels at the bottom of a cart, with its legs tied together."

"Will we take the short cut?" asked Terence, pointing to where Betty and Simon were scrambling up the side of a hill.

"No, it does not look tempting," replied Betty's mother. "We shall get there quite as comfortably by the road."

They were bound for a temple near a famous waterfall, still some miles away. The sky was becoming overcast with clouds. Mrs. Mowbray and

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her companion plodded on in silence for a few minutes, and then Terence spoke.

"It is a pity about poor Kilmorack," he said, unconcernedly enough. "No wonder he gets depressed at times."

Mrs. Mowbray glanced round at him before answering. She had bright black eyes, like Betty's, but with tired marks round them.

"What is wrong with Kilmorack?" she asked lightly. "He does not seem to have much the matter with him."

"Is it possible, now, that you never heard Hughie's story?" asked O'Brien, looking round in his turn with innocent amazement. "You have known him—let me see—it is three years, is it not, since we all met for the first time in Warwickshire? Oh yes, it happened before that."

"What?" asked Mrs. Mowbray, laughing. "Some more peris, like your friend in Allahabad that you are always telling me about?"

"Ah, it is cruel to joke about that," sighed Terence. "When I think that there is that dear, brave little boy (he must be a big lad by this time), that was my own son, you understand, and I could never give him a ride on my knee or carry him on my broad shoulder! Oh, the ag'ny of it! Our path is marked with tears of blood."

"Good gracious!" cried Mrs. Mowbray, "you've always told me that child was a girl."

"Did I?" said Terence absently. "Then very likely

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she was—or she might have had a brother. My bark is gone down and the ocean roars above it. But about Kilmorack now. Surely you heard of that unfortunate marriage?"

"Marriage?" repeated Mrs. Mowbray. "Has he ever been *married*?" And she stood still to wait for the answer. The hill was rather steep just here.

"Has he been married?" repeated Terence. "Has he *not*! It is the present situation of him, my dear lady, and that is what is the matter with his temper, and no wonder."

Terence's companion was silent for a few minutes, and then she sat down on a fallen tree trunk, and turned her face away. Terence had no desire to meet her glance and pretended to be absorbed in the view. The litter coolies left them, striking up a short cut through the woods.

"Tell me," at last Mrs. Mowbray found voice enough to say, and its horrible hopelessness wrung O'Brien with what he would have called an "ag'ny of remorse." But he knew that he must not flinch now.

"I don't suppose Kilmorack would mind you knowing, since you're such a dear friend of his," began Terence, "so I'll just tell you the—ahem—facts! You understand we never speak of the past. Our bark goes down——"

"Oh, never mind the bark!" cried Mrs. Mowbray in sudden fury. "Tell me the story."

"As far as I remember, I will," said Terence. "You

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see, when Hughie was reading with a tutor somewhere, he fell in love, as he was doubtless expected to do, with his tutor's daughter, a nice, pretty young woman, but with extra strict ideas. If you'll believe me she wouldn't look at him till he—well, he married her privately, so to speak—and then he goes to his poor mamma and says, 'Now you are a dowager, ma'am, and Miss Smith that was is Lady Kilmorack to-day.' Well, of course the old lady was very much upset, and when he asked her to receive the bride, she said she would not. And Miss Smith, who was a proud-spirited girl, she says, 'Tell your mamma that I would not set foot in her house, and if your fine relations don't think me good enough for you, Hugh Rose, good-bye. It's not forcing myself on anybody that I'll be. I'm going to convert the heathen!' and off she goes to Japan with some missionaries, taking her wedding ring with her mighty careful all the same. Now do you understand that poor boy's condition of mind?"

"Do you mean to say," gasped Mrs. Mowbray, speaking with difficulty, "that—that girl you told us about—"

"Is precisely the one, my dear lady. Oh, the tragedies, the heart-rending tragedies of common life! It is a tale for a play—and," he added to himself, turning away and wiping his brow, "it's hackneyed at that, but it'll have to do!"

By this time Mrs. Mowbray had recovered her composure to some extent.

"But he can get a divorce," she said. "It is always granted for desertion, isn't it?"

"And if he had wanted a divorce, is it just to Japan he would have brought the *Aurora*, with all his best friends on board?" asked Terence scornfully. He saw that this was a story which might run into more than one chapter, and he braced himself for another creative effort. "He came to look for her, of course, and now he has found her, and heaven only knows what the end of it will be. Maybe he'll have a reconciliation and want his honeymoon that had to be indefinitely postponed; and in that case," said Terence, coming to his point at last, "I'm thinking we'd be showing our knowledge of the world and friendliness to Kilmorack by transferring our baggage from the *Aurora* to a Canada steamer and completing our trip without him."

Poor Mrs. Mowbray looked terrified.

"But it is impossible," she said. "The awful expense! We would never have undertaken such a trip by ourselves, would we?"

"No," replied O'Brien; "frankly, we would not. But Hughie would make that all right. He is our entertainer till we get back to England, whether he comes with us or not."

"Oh!" sighed Mrs. Mowbray, somewhat relieved. "But how strange that he has waited all this time to find her. Terence, Lady Kilmorack has been dead for ever so long—it must be quite a year and a half. Why did Hughie, as you call him, not come here before?"

"Ah, why?" repeated Terence, very much puzzled to account for the delay. "The answer to that question, dear friend, is one of the sublime mysteries of the human heart. 'Tis a lyre, and the strings are silent till——"

"Fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray, with unconscious appositeness. "If Lord Kilmorack came here to find his wife (oh, what will my *poor* child say when she is told?) why did he bring us along? Is that another mystery of the human heart?"

"Of course it is," replied Terence. "Didn't he want his spirits kept up all the way here with hope—and all the way back, perhaps, with resignation, if he could not find her? Have I not told you time and again that you are one of those sweet creatures to whom we fly in our troubles?—that you can put a cracked teacup, so to speak, in boiling water and not break it, so tenderly do you handle it? But if my lady makes up her mind to go home with my lord, it would be almost indelicate for us to travel in the same boat. And I don't know that you would just hit it off with her. As I said before, she is a high-spirited girl, and she has had three or four years to nurse her temper. It should be fairly healthy by this time."

"Why did you never tell me of this before?" asked Mrs. Mowbray very reproachfully. "It—it makes a difference, you know."

"That is just what I thought it would," he replied with much truth, "and why should I have told you,

and saddened your kind heart with my friend's troubles? If he had thought of it, no doubt he would have confided in you. But Kilmorack is a reserved kind of man, and you'd be surprised to find how wanting he is in imagination."

There was quite a twinkle in Terence's eye as he made this last remark. He was an artist in his way, and always used any truth that came handy for the details of a good story.

Mrs. Mowbray was really subdued by the shock of O'Brien's information. She crawled into her litter again without speaking, and the coolies raised the creaking pole and trotted on with her, while Terence refreshed himself with a pull at his flask. Soon he caught up with Simon and Betty, who were waiting for him on a little platform where a few benches before a tea-house seemed to suggest that wayfarers should stop and look at the view, which here opened suddenly on a long pine-clothed ravine leading like an avenue to a distant stretch of misty silver, where the plain rolled its length to the sea. A very poor woman came and bowed to the travellers, and then brought out of the shed a dainty tray with golden-coloured tea that perfumed the air, already sweet with the aroma of the pines. Her best mat cushion was put out for Betty to sit upon, and her queer brown dog came sniffing round the visitors with many wags and smiles, explaining, as Japanese dogs always seem to do, that they understand English, even if their masters do not, and are extremely glad to see us.

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Just beyond the tea-house five dilapidated little Buddhas sat, each on his stone pedestal, piled up with pebbles put there by the faithful as reminders to the gods of their prayers and their respect. The faces of the figures were worn to featureless uniformity by stress of weather, but they seemed at least to take the edge off the solitude of the picture. The woman and the dog were the only inhabitants of the hut. One of the images, the smallest one, had a little frilled cape of scarlet cotton tied round its neck, and a bit of bamboo stood beside it, full of wild flowers set in water.

"What does that mean?" asked Betty of Katsu, who suddenly appeared, coming back to look for the stragglers.

"Small child die," he replied, "Japanese people remember, ask god to be kind." Then he turned and spoke to the woman, and she answered in the curious, unaccented speech which goes into complications and shades of expression unattempted in our business-like language. Katsu explained to Betty. The woman was a widow and had lost her one child the year before, so now she lived here alone. When the mountain was "open" for pilgrims, many came that way; but it was cold in the winter—very cold.

They gave her money, and she bowed to the ground, and then watched them disappear, laughing and talking, along the road to the woods. They did not belong to the class of people who could live alone in the forest asking the gods to be kind to a dead

child. To them she seemed little better than a savage, much to be pitied for being debarred from the only things that make life possible, and really on a lower plane than her brown dog, who could at any rate wag his tale in good English.

Terence was pleased that Betty had waited for him, and he had to tell himself sternly that Kilmorack had a right to his allegiance and support. But he knew he was going to miss Betty sadly. She need not be told of the impending separation yet, he thought; although, as he acknowledged with candour, she would not care a straw if she never laid eyes on poor Terence O'Brien again. But in this Terence was wrong. His humility as well as his vanity was apt to be misplaced. That very morning Betty had turned on young Simon quite sharply for calling him "Old O'Brien."

"Old, indeed!" said Miss Betty. "It is only people like you, who ought to be still at school, who would call him old. He is just forty, and I consider him very good-looking."

"Oh, come, that is going rather far," protested Simon, whose own remarkable good looks gave him a right to pronounce on those of others. "I should not call Terence a beauty, exactly."

"He is the kindest and truest creature in the world," cried Betty. "There is not one of us who has ever heard him say an unkind thing. And as for his looks, give Terence a banking account, and he would be the handsomest man in London."

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"There's no disputing about tastes," said Simon loftily, "and I'll wait till he gets the banking account to make up my mind about the other point. There will not be any hurry, I daresay."

This was the moment when Betty stopped to wait for Terence.

* * * * *

Some hours later a wet and forlorn convoy paused in the middle of a muddy torrent which had once been a road.

"I'll refuse to go a step farther," Mrs. Mowbray shrieked through a crack in the oilskin cover of her litter. "Where are we? Katsu, I insist upon knowing where we are."

"At the bottom of the sea, I should think," replied Terence, who had halted beside her dripping conveyance; "we could not be wetter there, anyway."

They were sheeted and shrouded in rain. The wind seemed to be blowing from every direction at once, and the water from below dashed up in spray to meet the flood from above. Never was a sadder party, and four of its drenched members turned like one man to the thought of an English coal fire under a London roof. The Japanese bore the drenching patiently, as they do all things, but the Englishmen began to blaspheme audibly, and the Englishwomen were not far from tears.

Katsu knew very well that they were close to Chuzenji, but it did not suit him to say so. He realised that it would be an awful business to house these

comfort-loving rich people in the wretched inn of the place for the night, and he preferred to get them back to Nikko at all costs. But he did not want to tell them that Nikko was still two hours distant. While he was deciding on some comforting untruth, Terence suddenly dashed to the side of the road and peered over a low wicket, of which he had caught sight between the slanting lances of the rain.

"By the powers, it is!" he cried, rushing back to Mrs. Mowbray's side. "My dear friend, we are saved. I know this gate; it leads to Miss Schmidt's hotel. Come on, Simon, we'll be under cover in a brace of shakes. Katsu, bring the ladies."

And he dashed on in front through the pine-wood where a path and some mat benches indicated the way to the house, and very soon opened the second gate and entered the little garden. There a thought came to him, and he waited valiantly till Mrs. Mowbray's kago was squeezed through by the coolies.

"I say, Mrs. Mowbray," he exclaimed, stooping down and putting his streaming face through her yellow curtains, "not a word of what I told you this morning. This is Miss Schmidt's hotel. You know no different to that, mind."

"Get me into a dry place and I'll say it belongs to the devil, if you like," said poor Mrs. Mowbray, between two sneezes. "I'd give my soul to get warm and dry. *Go on!*" she cried to the coolies, and in a minute more she was unpacked, a dripping bundle,

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from out of the basket, and Terence had to put both his "strong arms" round her to keep her from falling, for her numbed and cramped limbs refused to support her.

Hospitality is still old-fashioned among Europeans in Japan. It survives most of the other virtues, and a servant who turned away a foreigner in distress from the door of a foreign house would be instantly dismissed. Marna's "boy" received these dripping English people with such prompt aid and kindness, that they, not knowing the ways of the country, could not imagine it was being given gratuitously, and the illusion about Miss Schmidt's hotel grew stronger every minute. Katsu, who knew all about Major de Wesloff's villa, was not consulted, and was only too thankful to find, as he thought, that his party knew the owner. He was excessively polite and respectful to the boy, and everybody was satisfied. In five minutes a fire was lighted, hot tea and grogs were going round, wet boots were removed, and kind little Také, the maid, appeared with two wadded crape kimonos for the ladies to put on while their dresses should be dried. She took them into a spare bedroom to make the change, and Betty came back looking extremely pretty in a red and white gown, with a broad sash round her waist. Mrs. Mowbray's more mature figure did not show so well in the tight robe invented for the women who have no hips.

Simon and Terence had also been relieved of their

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coats, and were warming their shoeless feet at the fire as the women returned. The four wayfarers sat down to be very jolly while making up their minds to stay all night in this delightfully comfortable place. The boy had said something about "Missy" having gone out, and even Terence had forgotten Miss Schmidt's existence, when the garden gate flew open in a burst of the storm, and three more drenched creatures made one dash for the shelter of the verandah.

CHAPTER VII

IF Lord Kilmorack has appeared so far in this history as an unamiable young man who did not know his own mind, injustice has been done him. He was so anxious to find out his mind and take counsel with it that he was often impatient with people who interrupted the process. When he first made friends with them (being, in truth, a fairly sociable individual), it was always with the hope that he had struck something solid at last, that he would obtain a flash of freshness, of genuine liking, or good sound antipathy to persuade him of the reality of life, and he was almost always disappointed, finding that the men were as silly as the women, and the women as selfish as the men. He had come rather unwillingly to believe that the highest female claim to consideration lay in good looks. Nothing would induce him to make the acquaintance of an ugly woman, but he was never carried away by his admiration for a pretty one. He was an unconscious idealist, going through the world, like St. Christopher, in search of a master powerful enough to command his respect. Once found, he would put out his strength to serve his liege, whether man or woman.

His affection for Terence was a warm one, for he had found in the imaginative Irishman more truth than in all his other friends. Truth of speech

seemed a detail compared to the truth of the man's heart, which was incapable of treachery; his gentle boastfulness was atoned for by his real humility, and his habitual attitude to friend and foe was one of sunny indulgence. His friends were always the "best fellow" or the "sweetest woman" in the world; of his few foes, the worst he ever said, was, "It is all a mistake; things have gone against 'm, and the man isn't himself just now." Of course he never had an enemy among the women.

These are not qualities which command the world's respect, and "good old Terence" was carelessly patronised or altogether passed over by people who had not a tithe of his right to public consideration. Kilmorack, as has been said, loved him for his real merit, but these did not provide the younger man with that for which he sought—a leader who could claim his faith. It was always he who led O'Brien. Hugh was now thirty years old, and had managed his own affairs ever since he was twenty-one, but he still felt unprepared for life in many ways. It seemed as if he were going to be asked to take his place on the eve of battle without knowing to which regiment he belonged.

Perhaps he had hesitated too long. Often mere action in itself is so valuable to us that the object of it may take a second place. What our work has made of us will be the only sum left on our slate at the last, when it goes up to the Master for judgment; and the magnificent temporal recompense of the

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helpers of humanity is this: that while they spend and are spent to the last coin and the last breath in the passion of their service, it is making of them that to which they never give a thought—saints and kings in the eyes of God.

That is not for all of us, but at any rate, we should keep ourselves in sufficiently good training to answer a call if it comes, and Hugh was beginning to be conscious that in some things he was weaker than he had been a few years before. The mere smoothness and luxury of life were more important to him, his self-control in the matter of temper was relaxed, and in reviewing his whole conduct, there were points in it which made him wince. He had neglected old friends; snubbed a poor relation, he remembered; forgotten to provide for an invalided servant before he came away; he had drawn his income for years without ever inquiring farther into the welfare of his tenants than to make sure that his agent was a fairly honest man. And here he was, fourteen thousand miles away from home, spending thousands of pounds on entertaining people, who, barring Terence and Simon, did not need it, hardly enjoyed it, and bored him to extinction. How had he come, he mused, to make such a fool of himself?

It would have been more to the point to inquire how he had suddenly become conscious of that exploit, here in Japan. Perhaps, since he was really unspoilt, the majesty of the place in which he was appealed to him. Nikko is full of a large simplicity,

an honest grandeur, which speaks to souls who have not bartered all their birthright away in the scramble for excitement and pleasure. The secret of this power lies in subtle inherited allegiances dormant in these *âmes d'élite*, which awake and obey when summoned in the tones they can recognise. The Japanese acknowledge beauty of scenery and architecture as ennobling influences. The dear old lady who some years ago committed suicide at Nikko, because, as the letter found beside her explained, "she was too old to hope to revisit this glorious place, and so preferred to remain here for ever,"* had many admirers and perhaps some imitators in her calm option for the best things in the world.

Perhaps, too, the young man's spirit had been touched into a stronger life by the meeting with Marna. He found his thoughts constantly returning to that "fresh experience" of a few days ago. The girl's picture, her simplicity and completeness, seemed to rise up before him when he tried to look at other people. The first glimpse of her, after he got the snow out of his eyes that morning, was so enchantingly real. Not a bit of "make-up" anywhere, her fresh face, rosy and wet, her hair in and out of curl, blown all round it, her happy laughing mouth, her simple dress and ungloved hands. Ah! surely here was something real at last. He had put himself into a bad temper by combating the desire to see her again, the conflict only suggested

**Vide* "The Reclaiming of Kokichi."

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by his fear that the picture would lose on a second view; but now he thought he would risk that, and try to make his peace.

So he let his party sort themselves for the day, was very nice to Lady Cecilia at lunch, and disappeared almost immediately after that meal, leaving no explanations behind him. She and Ansell rather enjoyed being left together for once, and Ansell took her out for a walk and bought her an armful of Nikko specialties, including a quantity of the soft grey monkey fur which is so delightfully warm and becoming. Long before the storm came on they were safe indoors again, together with the prudent Brandon, who always wrote letters when it rained.

Kilmorack was not indoors, but on the bare hill-side, when the downpour began. At first he laughed at it, reflecting that there were few facts about rain which even Japan could teach a Highlander. But when it increased to a deluge, blown into water-spouts by a vicious and violent gale, he was fain to reconsider his opinion. The rain of Japan justifies the primary part played by wind and water, embodied as cloud and spray, in the country's art and theology. In China the two words, "Fêng Shui," denote all the invisible powers which most closely govern the life of man. Their literal meaning is "wind" and "water."

Kilmorack crouched under a rock to take shelter for a few minutes, while considering what next to do. The stone was a huge upright one, set close to

the course of a stream, and was deeply engraved with bold characters, which of course the traveller could not understand. He found that his shelter was transforming itself into a convenient shoot for a young waterfall, which drenched him thoroughly as he sprang out from under it; and as he had a good memory and was fairly sure of his way, he decided to go on. The rain would have kept Miss Schmidt indoors, and he trusted to his own good manners and sincere intentions to induce her to receive him. After all, it was only polite to return and thank her for her hospitality. Two little facts seemed to have escaped his memory: he had, as he thought, paid for his meal, and Miss Schmidt had unconditionally asked him to go away.

He missed his road after all, and came out too high, and beyond the village, for it lay below him, apparently on the point of being washed into the lake, which was breaking in angry foam against the descending streams. He knew that the house he wished to find stood at the other end, on the Nikko side, and he made a dash down the hill and got into the swirling mud of the village street. Then he turned his face resolutely towards Miss Schmidt's abode, and experienced a very genuine sensation when he saw on the road ahead of him two Europeans, a man and a woman, with heads down, racing along in the teeth of the storm, and rather enjoying the fun, to judge by one or two ringing laughs which came back to him on the gale.

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There was the girl he was seeking, her serge dress reduced to a wet blue roll tucked up under one arm, a shivering dog under the other, her feet and ankles cased in mud, her hat gone and a highly-coloured pocket-handkerchief (borrowed from Willie) tied over her dripping hair. Marna looked like the princess who turned goose-girl, and who could never cure herself of the gay grace that would shine through the rags.

Kilmorack's heart leapt. Here was luck! He would present himself as a fellow-sufferer, on whom she would certainly have compassion, seeing he was in the same sad plight as herself. He began to run, and in a moment stopped at Marna's side. He pulled off his cap, which at once became a dripping lump, and asked if he might walk beside her; he had lost his way.

She looked up quickly, and saw the "interesting face," with its amused grey eyes, and the forage-cap brand on the high forehead, whence the rain was sending runnels down two rather gaunt but fresh-coloured cheeks.

At this moment Kilmorack had the most distinct sensation that had yet been granted him, for Marna blushed a vivid crimson up to the very wet rings of her hair, and for one delicious instant her eyes dropped and he could count a dozen little beads of rain on their dark golden lashes. Then they were raised to his, with nothing but pleasure in their clear depths.

"Of course," she said; "come on with us, and let me offer you shelter till this storm is over! Come along, Willie," she cried, turning to her companion, who had withdrawn a little, seeing that she had met a friend. "We shall be drowned if we stand still!" she added, and then they all three ran for their lives, laughing as they splashed recklessly on, followed by the dogs, and only taking breath when they reached the garden gate.

The first notice of the previous invasion of the house was given by the dogs, who saw or smelt something that aroused their angry suspicions, and gave their opinion in furious barks. Rep, safe at home, wriggled down to join the other two, and at once the beautiful features and blue eyes of Simon de Fresel appeared at the drawing-room window.

"Who on earth is that?" cried Marna, as she dashed up the steps and got under cover of the verandah. She had hardly spoken when the servant appeared, much relieved to see the young mistress safe home again.

"Who is in the drawing-room?" Marna inquired, as the man stooped down to undo her mud-laden shoes. He looked up surprised.

"Missisy no savvy?" he asked. "Two gentlemen, two ladies come—my think Missisy expecting them. Inside come ask."

"Of course," said Marna, "bad weather time, everybody inside come ask. Please take off your shoes here," she pleaded, turning to the men, "the

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house is all mats, you know. The boy will find you some slippers."

Then she left them, and went to the drawing-room door. She paused and looked back.

"This way, you know, Willie," she called. "Get some tea, *directly*, Umà!"

"Here comes Miss Schmidt," said Simon, turning round from the window; "and there's Hughie and another man with her."

Then Marna opened the door, and was met by Terence, with a smile that expressed apology, protection, admiration, and various other sentiments calculated to soften a woman's heart.

"It is all my fault," he pleaded, "we were drowned in the rain, and I remembered your kindness to me, and thought you wouldn't mind my bringing my friends in out of the raging storm."

"Why, of course not," replied Marna, in her ringing foreign voice. "I am so glad you thought of it. You must have got dreadfully wet," she continued, turning to Mrs. Mowbray and Betty, who had not risen from their chairs, but sat there taking stock of Miss Schmidt, while they were dressed in her lovely kimonos.

"Let me introduce you to them," said Terence, with a wave of the hand. "Mrs. Mowbray, Miss Betty Mowbray, Mr. de Fresel."

Simon came forward with his celebrated bow, inherited from his father, who had been famous for having the finest manners in Europe. Mrs. Mow-

bray raised her eyebrows, and slightly bent her head, not at all pleased at being put on a level with the young person of the boarding-house, to whom she owed the worst disappointment of her life. Betty jumped up and came to shake hands, saying:

"I cannot tell you how grateful we are! Your kind servants have simply saved our lives!"

"Well, I am very glad," said Marna, "and now I must go and save my own. I have not a dry thing on me!" she added laughing, for Betty's bright face quite made up for the other woman's stiffness in her eyes. As she turned away into the passage, she met Kilmorack and Willie approaching the door.

"Make the servants get everything that is wanted, Willie," she said in a low tone, "there are a few of my father's things up in his room. You and Lord Kilmorack look as if you ought to change directly! And perhaps the other gentlemen would like some dry clothes, too!"

Willie had no objection to doing the honours. He recognised Kilmorack, and saw that the other visitors belonged to the *Aurora* party, of whom he had caught sight at the Grand Hotel in Yokohama.

"If you will come with me," he said to the men, "I think I can find you some dry things upstairs."

They followed him gladly, and Betty was left alone in the drawing-room with her mother.

"What does it all mean?" asked the girl, whose trained instincts on social subjects were as infallible as those of a fox terrier about a rat.

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"What?" asked her mother, relapsing into her easy chair with an air of profound depression.

"That is a very smart woman!" Betty declared. "A boarding-house for missionaries indeed! Why, there isn't a text about the place, and did you see the way she took it all, as if we were her best friends and she had been expecting us all day? Don't tell me that girl hasn't been about a good bit, and with people as smart as they make them!"

"Betty," said her mother, glancing over her shoulder to see that the door was shut, "I have a terrible piece of news—I ought to tell you now. You must not make any mistake—"

"Why, mother," exclaimed Betty, "you look terribly bothered. I am so sorry! What has happened?"

"Come close," whispered Mrs. Mowbray. "That girl was some country clergyman's daughter—they are always the ones who do go wrong—and, Betty, you will not believe it—"

"That *she* is a 'wrong 'un?'" Betty answered. "No, I don't think I should. I would stake my last sovereign that she is as straight as you or I."

Mrs. Mowbray winced, but answered bravely:

"It is not exactly *wrong* that I meant to say, my dear, but—I must tell you, for they'll all be coming back directly—Kilmorack married her privately years ago, and she ran away from him. Try and bear it bravely, dear."

And Mrs. Mowbray, really grieved for her daugh-

ter's disappointment, opened her arms to receive and comfort the wounded dove.

Betty threw herself into them, not in tears, but in shrieks of laughter, which she tried to suppress on her mother's shoulder.

"Oh, my dear, do control yourself!" wailed Mrs. Mowbray, "you never had any tendency to hysteria, and I thought you would be strong enough to bear it."

"Bear it!" echoed Betty, lifting her crimson face from Mrs. Mowbray's bosom, "why, it's the funniest thing I ever heard in my life. The young rip! And he never said a word about it. Oh, it is perfectly delightful!"

"I am glad you find it amusing," said Mrs. Mowbray ruefully; "I confess it bowled me straight over. I thought he was so fond of you, and——"

"I know, mother," said the girl soothingly, "and you hoped that all sorts of things would happen. Now I will tell you something. They never would have happened. I have been making up my mind for the last two months that Kilmorack, with his moods of murderous boredom, and his ideals (that Terence's "pe-ri" couldn't realise if she'd ever existed), and his Catholicism that he says is the only religion fit for a gentleman, is not the husband for me! I would rather never have a new frock again, and live and laugh my own way, than try to qualify for the post of Lady Kilmorack."

"Betty!" said Mrs. Mowbray, "I could not have

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believed it of you! However, as things are, I suppose it is just as well."

"Just as well!" said Betty, forgetting all prudence, "I should think so! If Kilmorack were as rich as Mr. Ansell, and as handsome as poor Simon, I wouldn't marry him. I'll marry the man I love—as soon as I am ready—and," here she turned away to the window, "I know his name, too."

"You are too kind, Miss Mowbray," said Hughie, who had just entered. "There is one thing at least about which we shall agree in future."

"I don't care if we do or not," cried Betty, "and I think it would have been more open and fair on your part if you had told your friends what you were coming to Japan for. I don't mind, you know; I have enjoyed myself immensely, but it would have interested some of them!"

"May I ask," said Hugh, looking very dangerous, "what has procured me the honour of your opinion as to my temper and my religion, which I think I heard you mention as I came down the passage? As you chose a room with paper walls for your proclamation, I suppose you meant it to be discussed."

"No, I did not," said Betty, facing him with flashing eyes; "and you are one of the people who should give notice when they are coming along, if they want to hear good of themselves!"

"Oh, Betty, how can you?" cried poor Mrs. Mowbray, in great distress.

"Man, man," Kilmorack heard whispered in his ear, while a hand gripped his arm and tried to drag him back into the passage, "if you go on like this, you'll have to have a reconciliation, and all my work will be undone!"

He turned and saw Terence, almost dancing with excitement, and evidently bursting with triumph.

"O-o-oh?" queried Kilmorack, the anger in his face giving place to amusement.

"Yes," whispered Terence, "come on here, and I will report progress." And he drew him into a snug-gery on the other side of the passage, where an open screen showed a glimpse of two deep chairs and a row of pipes on the wall. It was the spot where Major de Wesloff dozed away the hot summer afternoons.

"Speak gently, then," suggested Hugh; "if ever walls had ears, those are the ones!" and he pointed at a hole in the paper screen, where some stick or finger had been pushed through.

"Oh, I'm not about to burden you with information," said Terence in his splendid stage whisper; "'tis an integral part of my design that you should be an innocent actor in it. Just accept any monstrous accusation that Miss Betty, dear girl, may fling at you. You'll survive it, and it's a relief to her feelings."

"But what have you been telling them, Terence?" asked Kilmorack. "I really don't care much about myself, but I cannot have those women, my friends

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after all, shocked and pained. You never told her what I said about silk skirts and compliments, surely? I would never forgive you, Terence."

"Set your intelligence at rest, my boy," replied his friend. "I am too fond of Miss Betty to make her feel bad by repeating the outpourings of your sore heart when you had had a shocking bad dinner, and Mrs. Mowbray had been shoving the counters about afterwards. No, no, I only mentioned you once, in a casual and indirect manner. No connection or aspersion on present company was so much as hinted at. I know how to manage women, my dear fellow! *Suaviter in modo*—"

"Kissed her *in re*!" laughed Hugh, "I know you, you dear old humbug! But, what was it you said? She is frightfully angry with me!"

"Well (now mind you take it quietly), I just said I had the strongest reason to believe that your affections were permanently engaged before you came to sea, and that there was a chance of your meeting the lady in Japan. Upon my word that was—nearly all I said! And poor Mrs. Mowbray (she's a good soul, barring the cheating) she took it a bit hard just at first. But I don't think Betty minds, the spin of a coin. I heard her shrieking with laughter just now, when her mother must have been telling her the pretty tale. D'ye know, Kilmorack—you won't mind my saying it, will you?—I begin to think Betty is not in love with you at all!"

"I have faced that fact for some time, Terence,

and I seem to be getting on all right, don't I?" Hugh replied, laughing at Terence's apologetic way of conveying this crushing bad news. "But I say," he went on, "if I am to be an innocent victim of your calumnies for my benefit, let me have the fun of hearing the story. There was more than that to it, I know!"

"Well, if I start to relate a fact," replied his friend, "it is more likely than not I'll make a light, elegant anecdotal affair of it, especially if it is concerned with somebody I've a regard for. There's where the Irish are so grandly superior to all other Englishmen. Give us two and two to make five of, and we'll do it with an art and a grace that would make Lucifer smile when coal's getting dear. Kilmorack, d'ye think he takes the old sinners off to put the new ones on, just for economy, at times? Can't you see Oliver Cromwell sitting in a corner, blowing his fingers to cool down a bit!"

"You must never say any one is damned, Terence; the Church forbids it, you know very well. Not but what it is difficult to locate some people, as the Cardinal said."

Kilmorack was a staunch Catholic, Terence a delightfully happy one.

"But now," went on the younger man, "if that is all I am to hear, and I have your word that nothing unkind or untrue has been said, I think I may pass over your little fiction about my affections. Would you mind telling me if rows of pipes are habitually

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found in ladies' boarding houses? This thing is a yard long, and there's a danseuse on the bowl."

He pointed to a big cherry-wood pipe which was a great favourite with Major de Wesloff.

"The whole surroundings of Miss Schmidt are wrapped in elegant mystery," said Terence, sniffing at the weapon appreciatively. "Look at these clothes the boy lent us—satin-lined smoking jacket, silk sleeping-shirts at 29s. 6d. a piece at the very least! Oh, Kilmorack, for a man that had time to unravel her, that beautiful young woman would be an interesting study!"

"I think I'll have a shot!" said Hugh, under his breath.

Terence caught the words.

"There's one thing more I must entreat," he said, laying his hand solemnly on the other man's arm, "as long as we stay here (and by the look of things we should have to shoot a waterfall for two hours or so to get back to Nikko to-night), promise me you will answer no questions about Miss Schmidt, and whatever those dear women may sing or say about her, you just shake your head and shut your mouth. It isn't much to grant your friend who is imperilling all his best interests to serve you."

"All right," Kilmorack replied. "I'll try and look what I am, for once—profoundly ignorant on the subject, and most unwilling to discuss it. Will that satisfy you?"

"It will," exclaimed Terence. "And now, see if

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we can find a drink. I never was so thirsty in my life."

"We will seek that other unexplained trifle called Willie," said Hugh. "He seems to have an idea where things are kept. You are right, as usual, Terence; we are in the heart of an 'elegant mystery.' "

CHAPTER VIII

It is not often that a typhoon visits Japan so early as the end of April, but when it does come, it appears to be quite ready for its work. No bad weather on this side of the world can serve as an illustration of its fury. The terrific external commotion is accompanied by acute electric disturbances, which act painfully on the nerves and inexplicably on the barometer, where the needle hardly stays still for a moment, but goes dancing round the circle from "Change" to "Set Fair" a dozen times an hour. Once only, in the worst storm I ever witnessed when people could not hear each other speak for the uproar, and all roads and railways were broken up for many miles, the glass stuck at "Set Fair" for several hours, with a sublime abstraction which seemed a little cruel to people who were expecting to have the roof carried away at any moment.

The collection of men and women in Marna's cottage were more than usually interested in their own and each other's affairs on that stormy evening but by the time the conspirators had found their "drinks," and Betty had repented of her hasty words to Kilmorack, and Marna had put on a dry frock and shaken the rain out of her hair, they had all become conscious that something very extraordinary was

going on outside. It seemed as if the whirlwind had taken the light building for its central point, and were dancing a war dance on the roof, with snapplings of wet draperies, and rattlings of ironshod feet, and songs that rose to shrieks and died away in long moans and growls under the flail of the driving rain. All this on the roof and walls of a wooden dwelling meant for fair weather was alarming to the last degree, and the house itself seemed to be shuddering to its shallow foundations under the attack. So far the roof held good; but a warning runnel began to trickle down one side of the stairs, and little pools were spreading into the verandahs from under the barred "amados," or wooden shutters, which the servants had run into place an hour ago.

Marna faced the situation with the courage of youth. She could not turn these poor people out into the storm; indeed they would have refused to go. So she had to consider the problem of five unexpected guests, for whom she must find beds and dinner, with the cook in jail. In a way she was glad that they had come, for Willie alone on her hands would have presented a problem still harder of solution. She would have had to house the poor boy, and nobody would ever forgive her for doing so. As things were now, he could be of some assistance in entertaining the others, and it was a comfort to her to have one old ally at her side, in this invasion of strangers. There was a silent ex-

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citement beneath all these prudential considerations, something which made everything seem easy and light, because of a pleasure that the storm had brought.

"I am afraid you will have to make up your minds to stay all night!" Marna remarked, as she came into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Mowbray and Betty were recovering from their emotion, and listening anxiously to the artillery of the storm. "I am without a cook to-day, and I fear I can only offer you a kind of high-tea dinner." And she sat down beside Betty on the sofa.

"Oh, I daresay it will do very well," said Mrs. Mowbray, stiffening again, "if you can let my daughter and me have that nice double bedroom where we changed our clothes, we shall be quite satisfied."

Marna glanced at her, puzzled.

"Dear me, it is very good of you to say that!" she exclaimed a little sarcastically. She was still inexperienced at hiding what she felt.

Betty as usual came to the rescue.

"What a pretty sitting-room this is," she said, "just enough Europe and just enough Japan in it! But oh," she continued as a terrific gust seemed to take the house in its teeth and shake it, "do you often have such storms as this?"

Marna's answer was made inaudible by a crash of masonry followed by shrieks from the servants' quarters.

"It is the kitchen chimney, I think," she said. "If so we shall have to fall back on the tinned beef. I will go and see." And she ran out, leaving the two women alone again. When she returned, the rest of the party had joined them, and the silence of fear seemed to reign within, while the elements were at play outside.

"Was it the chimney?" inquired Willie, who had been taking stock of the group, while Kilmorack was examining the dragon carving so as not to have to talk to Betty. Simon looked very much interested, Terence bold, and the ladies horribly frightened.

"It was," cried Marna; "a ton and a half, at least, of bricks, right through the roof, on top of the stove. The boy says he can cook something over a candle, so you shall not starve outright. We built up that chimney last autumn only—it had fallen three times before that."

Kilmorack turned at the sound of her voice, and her smile included him as she addressed the meeting. She was wearing a kimono, out of a friendly desire to keep the other women company, and Kilmorack suddenly realised what an artistic garment it was, when properly put on. European women affect it a good deal in the heats of summer, but very few know how to wear it.

Marna's robe was of twilight blue crape, lined with a silk tinted like ripe wheat. Také San had drawn the drapery in beautiful symmetry across the

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bosom, and the stiff gold and brown "obi" was sashed in tightly from there to below the hip; thence the folds swept away and lay on the mats in soft rolls of colour, just opening where the shapely foot should pass. The sleeves, sweeping the ground like wings in repose, fell back from the white wrist and arm, nearly to the elbow. Marna's wavy hair, looking a duskier gold at night than in the daytime, was gathered high on her head, and its coils kept in place by a tortoise-shell comb, the colour of honey in the sun.

"A most beautiful young woman," murmured Terence to Simon, in tones of worship, as he looked at her. Even Mrs. Mowbray admitted to herself that there was something to be said for Kilmorack's early folly. The girl looked barely twenty now, she must have been a mere child when she ran away from him. As for Betty, she was feminine enough to watch Hugh very closely when Miss Schmidt entered the room. She thought they both had an amazing control of their feelings, and her respect for them began to increase. What an absurd position it was after all, and how furious the man would be if he thought she knew!

Marna had done the honours for the hospitable major so many times, that a dinner-party, even if there were nothing to eat, amused her greatly. When a little later the boy came and bowed at the door, to indicate that dinner was ready, Marna nodded to Willie, as the man of the house, to lead off with Mrs.

Mowbray. Simon promptly gave his arm to Betty, and Marna, herself, with a little smile to Terence left out in the cold, laid her hand on Kilmorack's sleeve, and followed. At dinner she made the Irishman sit on her left as pendant to Hugh on the other side, and Willie placed himself opposite to her, between the two Mowbrays. The table was lovely at least, with branches of azalea-blossom spreading in profusion from the huge silver drinking-horn which stood in the centre, and the hanging light had the proper rose-coloured shade. What there was of the dinner was excellent, for such trials are the opportunities of clever Japanese servants; and the wine caused Terence to break into a slow smile, which rose from his very heart and ended in that subdued smack with which the connoisseur seems to kiss the last drop of a fine vintage off his lips.

There was a slight lull in the storm, and everybody was listening to Marna, who was describing a former experience of this kind; all feelings of strangeness gave way before the girl-hostess's unconstrained, amusing talk. Even Mrs. Mowbray laughed at her account of packing up for a flight, and finding the cook sitting on the kitchen roof clinging to a stove pipe, so as not to be washed into the lake. The older woman had ruffled her plumes angrily when Miss Schmidt showed that she meant to play hostess and not landlady. But she reflected that she would probably be presented as "Lady Kilmorack, on her wedding," at the next Drawing-

room, and there was no use in quarrelling with her now.

Umà, the boy, gave them a first-rate soup, and had just brought in a dainty ragoût, whose ingredients of pressed beef, tinned peas, and green corn had all been found in the store-cupboard, and cooked by him over a brazier of charcoal; Marna nodded approval at him, and a warm pride filled his heart, for the Japanese will do even more for the *onore di casa* than the Italian, who would go hungry for a week himself rather than have his master's table seem ill-provided. Just as Umà reached Mrs. Mowbray's side, a strident howl of wind was heard, and was immediately followed by an onslaught of the gale, so terrific that it seemed impossible not to believe that large rocks were being hurled against the house. At the same moment a sharp upward movement of the floor set the table dancing, while the hanging lamp swung backwards and forwards till a smoky flame a foot long shot up from the chimney and threatened the cord. They all sprang to their feet, and then tried to steady themselves by the rocking table.

Marna had turned deathly white, Willie Barnes jumped up to catch the lamp and put it out, and Umà carefully put his dish down on a side table and then fled, like a hunted animal, out to the back regions and an open door. These three knew what earthquakes were. The others hardly realised what was happening.

"All right, Willie, just turn it down," Marna

managed to say. "It is over, I hope. That was a bad one."

"What is it?" everybody asked at once.

"A vertical shock," replied Willie Barnes, with the air of an old campaigner. "They are unpleasant. We shall have another in a minute or two. They never come alone."

"That is what I think we may call a fresh sensation," said Simon's cool, gentle voice; "distinctly fresh, eh, Hughie?"

"Most disturbing!" exclaimed Terence. "Mrs. Mowbray, you look quite pale. And Miss Betty—why, what's the matter, darling? You are badly frightened, that's all. Here, have a glass of wine."

For poor Betty had fallen back in her chair, looking really ill with this, the first bad fright of her life. Terence put his arm under her head and held a glass of wine to her lips, while two tears rolled down her cheeks, and she shook pitifully as she caught at his hand.

"Oh, take me away!" she moaned. "Take me away, Terence. Let's go and be safe somewhere."

While all this ado was going on in the dining-room over a little shock of earthquake, the wind renewed its battering blasts against the poor house, which jumped and shivered like a beaten hound, and then set to rocking about more like a boat at sea. A shutter burst open in the verandah, and through the break came a torrent of angry rain, that only took a minute or two to reduce the

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paper and lattice of the inner screen to a dripping wreck.

Marna, who had sat down in her place to set an example of fortitude to the others, now jumped up looking very determined.

"This won't do," she exclaimed; "if the wind once gets inside the house, we shall go sailing off into the middle of the lake! Willie, we must get the chains out and moor fast."

"What does that mean?" asked Kilmorack; "you are not going out in this weather, I assure you."

"Yes I am," she said, smiling at his authoritative tone. "It is better that I should get a wetting than that we should pass the night with no roof, is it not? Besides, I cannot let the place be destroyed. Mr. Barnes will help me. The servants are not much good when they are frightened."

"We will all help if there is anything to do," replied Kilmorack; "only show us what you want."

"You need not come," said Willie to Marna, "I know all about it. I did it last time, don't you remember?"

"Those chains are very heavy, and I would rather be doing something," Marna replied; "this awful noise gets on one's nerves. Oh, there goes another chimney!"

Again a rattle of falling bricks was heard, but so tremendous was the noise of the storm that it did not make much impression on the ear.

"Don't go till I come back, Willie," said Marna.

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"The keys are upstairs; I must fetch them," and she left the room, Kilmorack's eyes following the tall figure in its clinging draperies as it moved smoothly down the passage.

"What is meant by the chains?" asked Simon de Fresel, while they waited for her return.

"It is a Japanese invention," Willie answered, "these light little houses have only about two feet of foundation and no walls, you see; so if the wind gets inside they rise like an umbrella and sail away, as Miss Marna says. So, for very bad storms, they hook on a heavy chain to each corner of the roof, and fasten it to a staple in the ground."

Willie's terrible habit of saying Miss Marna, instead of Miss de Wesloff, in public, was one of the many things for which she had scolded him in vain. The foreign name gave more trouble to pronounce. As no one had the slightest idea of what his position towards her was, the refugees did not care to ask him any questions. He was light-haired and blue-eyed, but he certainly was not her brother.

In a few minutes the girl came back, her sweeping robes replaced by a short, dark skirt and jacket, while a little knitted hood was tied over her head, giving her the look of the Iceland girls.

"That is very business-like," remarked Kilmorack rising; "now we are all coming to see the fun. May we?"

"You will just get wet through again," she protested, but no one took any notice of her, and

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Terence, who had been murmuring comfort to poor Betty in undertones, seeing the other men going out, gave her hand a little squeeze and followed them.

Marna led the way round to a small door at the back of the house, having first sent Umà to try and close the shutter at the front. As she and her helpers came out one by one, the wind met them and blew them over like tin soldiers; but they scrambled up again, and held on till the corner of the verandah was reached. Here, with great difficulty in the pitchy darkness and driving rain, a length of heavy chain was pulled out from under the step, and one end raised by a block and cord to the corner of the low roof, where a stout ring received the hook. Then the other, slippery and ponderous, was carried out to where the corresponding ring was sunk in a stone slab. This was a task of difficulty, for the storm beat cruelly in the faces of the workers, and Marna was only too grateful for the three Englishmen's help. At last it was done, and the links rattled ominously against each other.

"Come back and rest for a minute!" cried the girl, and they drew into the doorway, and stood looking out on the wet war of the elements. Marna found herself close to Kilmorack, who was shaking himself like a poodle.

"It is no use," she cried, "do go back! There are three more to do, and upon my word I don't

believe there is another dry jacket in the house to offer anybody! Oh!" This as she was taken off her feet and flung into some helping arms which proved to be Simon's. She recovered herself in a moment and dashed out to reach the next corner, the men racing after her. All this wind and rain suited their northern blood finely. Kilmorack found time as he followed Miss Schmidt to decide that she was quite the freshest person he had ever met, and this not in the schoolboy sense of the word. Her courage and gaiety made it delightful to be with her, even through a typhoon.

When they came to the last corner, in front of the house and nearest to the water, they found a small raging sea beating up at them from where the landing-stage had stood that evening. All was swept away, and the lake which had looked like the floor of heaven at sunrise was casting up black rollers edged with angry spray, one beyond the other, showing through the storm by their own evil light where every other object was sheeted in darkness.

Marna and Hugh were the foremost of the party, and paused together as a roaring billow broke a few feet away, and covered them with a shower of water colder on their cheeks than the rain. Kilmorack caught the girl's arm and drew her back.

"You must not go on," he said, in quick command. "This is getting serious. Does your lake ever rise?"

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"I don't know," she gasped, for speech was difficult. "I never saw anything half so bad as this! I think I am frightened."

And she actually caught at his hand and held it tightly in her cold, wet fingers. Nothing in his life had ever given him so much pleasure before.

"Are you?" he said. "I am so glad," and he drew the cold hand very close to him.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Willie, just behind them, gripping another man's shoulder to stay himself. "There's something bobbing up and down there! I believe it is one of the dogs."

They all peered out into the blackness, to which their eyes were getting accustomed, so that it was no longer impenetrable as at first. A small white object was distinctly visible, being washed about in the trough of the waves.

"It is Rep!" cried Marna. "Oh, the poor little thing!" and she sprang forward to plunge after him. Before the others knew what had happened, she had shot away into the darkness, and found herself battling with rough water, out of her depth, while the agonised countenance of the poor doggie kept its distance, just beyond her reach. He had recognised her, and broke the silence in which a dog fights for his life by one heart-rending howl. She was a good swimmer, and at the sound she threw herself forward bravely, in spite of her heavy skirts; and in two strokes got her hand on Rep's slippery coat and lifted him to her shoulder, where

he clung convulsively as she tried to turn and get back. That she could never have done alone, for the gale in one of its furious whirls suddenly set against her; Rep was slipping from her shoulder, and she turned her head and caught his collar with her teeth, and had one little minute of horror, as she felt that they were being flung out from land again. Never was a girl so glad as Marna when she found a man on either side of her, holding her aching arms and drawing her in over those few yards of black, swirling water to the blessed friendly mud of the shore.

They three, Marna, Kilmorack, and Simon, were speechless for a moment as they tumbled forward to safety, and Terence had it all his own way when he began to scold them to the music of the storm.

"Now, what in blazes did you do that for?" he cried, trying to pick them all up at once. "Is it not sheer blasphemy for three great tall handsome boys and girls to go swimming out to sea after a bit of a cur, that ought to have been drowned an hour after it was born? Kilmorack, I thought ye'd more sense than let this dear child commit gratuitous suicide under your eyes! Come on, come on, into the house, or what's left of it, and pray the powers we find a dry corner and a hot drink! You are all raving mad, that's what you are, (look out, here's the step, pull the girl up!) and now, if all the animals in the ark were drowning in brigades,

not a soul goes out of this house till to-morrow morning, if that blessed moment ever comes!"

Nobody contradicted him. Marna was feeling deadly sick, and collapsed on the floor of the kitchen, into which place Terence had managed to pilot the party. Kilmorack and Simon looked at each other and began to laugh before they had got their breath, so that they choked ignominiously, and had to be patted on the back by the irate Irishman. Willie was offering Marna half a tumbler of neat whisky into which the rescued Rep, who was an irreclaimable toper, plunged his ugly pink nose first, and a little army of sympathetic servants were hovering round with bath towels, and trying to mop up the streams which trickled freely across the floor.

"Ye little devil," said Terence, suddenly seizing the dog, and holding him up to execration by the scruff of his neck, "was it worth while for three precious young lives to be risked to save you from the fate for which you were born? I appeal to the House, *was it worth while?*"

"It was," said Kilmorack, stooping down over Marna, and looking into her face; "wasn't it?"

She forgot how sick, and cold, and miserable she felt; she forgot all the grotesque disasters of the last twenty-four hours; and as she looked back into his loving, laughing, grey eyes, the dimple danced in her cheek, she nodded her head solemnly, at

least three times, and said very low: "It certainly was."

Then she rose unsteadily to her feet, and, leaning on Také, who just reached to her elbow, got away at last to her own room.

"It appears to me," remarked Terence dryly (if anything could be called dry on that awful night), "that I am developing the remarkable gift of prophesying backwards. 'Tis the modern quality by which my family has replaced the now extinct banshee. Kilmorack, do ye happen to remember the motives I described to one of my friends as having determined your voyage to this damp continent?"

"Get out," said Kilmorack, turning round on him with a flushed face; "if you had the makings of a sportsman about you, you'd come and help me and Simon to find a blanket to sit up in for the rest of the night. It is to be hoped we shall not be called out on active duty again, for we should have to perform it deprived of a uniform."

"That," said Simon, in the calm voice that always had a monastic note in it, "would be (what is it you always say, Hughie?) distinctly fresh. Oh, my dear cousin, you meant well, I know, but take me back to Piccadilly! I have had almost enough of the Sunny East."

CHAPTER IX

THROUGH the rest of that long night the men sat together in Marna's dining-room, where Will collected for their benefit all the tobacco he could lay hands on, unlimited drinks, and the most comfortable chairs in the house. Towards three o'clock there was a lull in the gale, but by that time the foreigners' nerves were getting deadened to the continued roar and shaking, and a general atmosphere of thick smoke, damp clothes, general talk, and whisky, prevailed in the meeting. Terence was in great form, and as all his stories were new to Willie, he kept the young man in roars of laughter, while Kilmorack and Simon smiled sympathetically through the smoke. The bulldog had taken a great fancy to Simon, and kept his muzzle on his knee, gazing up into his face with such pathetic admiration that Kilmorack suggested "Beauty and the Beast," or the "Awakening of a Soul."

"Who knows?" said Simon languidly, "he may be choosing the features he will appear with next time. We are in the country of the transmigration of souls, are we not?"

"It is a fatiguing notion," said Hugh; "most of

us will have had quite enough of this life with one visit. Unless we could choose a companion to come back with."

"Ah!" said Terence, with his classic wink at Simon, "and who would you be thinking of bringing on your return ticket, Kilmorack? That dear lady upstairs who is so surprisingly quick with the counters? Or your cook off the *Aurora* that you're pining for this very minute?"

"Only if there were discount for a party," said Kilmorack. "If I could have but one companion, it would be yourself, Terence. You are the best company I know."

"Hear, hear," said Simon.

"Oh, I shall be in my lonely grave long before you boys start on promiscuous transmigrations, so to speak. Lord, how I hate it already! When that earthquake came, I seemed to smell the mould and to be searching round in vain for a smoke or a drink, with my stiff fingers. Mind you come to me funeral, both of you, and don't you go throwing earth on my bones—I shall be having all I want of that. Send down a three-ounce packet of Cavendish instead. And don't ye go to the wrong funeral, either, though it's a natural kind of mistake to make when the influenza is sending folks out to the cemetery in batches, and the undertakers' men have to be numbered so as not to get mixed up there."

"Rubbish!" said Simon. "You're only manœuv-

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ring to get your story in, Terence. Make haste and let us have it over."

"There's gratitude for all the innocent entertainment I have provided for you free of charge, Simon de Fresel. Who ever accused Terence O'Brien of telling the same story twice? When I am dead and gone, ye'll wish I'd told them oftener, for, without vanity, I will say that there are few young men of my age who have had the amazing experience, and masterly grasp of a situation, that has been mine ever since I knew toffy from tobacco. But your ungentle scoffs shall not deprive this dear boy of that strange tale.

"Now, ye must understand," he went on, turning to Willie, "that my friend Fitzger'l'd (I'll tell you another story about him afterwards), had a wife, a sweet, pretty woman, but none too wise. It was a friend here and a friend there, and the mother-in-law fighting Fitzger'l'd and holding out the hand of friendship to her daughter's admirers, as mother-in-laws have a silly way of doing. I've no doubt you've remarked it. And there was one young man in particular, that was always dancing round, and one fine day, Mrs. Fitzger'l'd, she goes so far as to run away with him. He was as handsome as Apollo, and a good boy, barrin' his mistakes with the women, and they were a bit overdone. Poor Fitzger'l'd had a heart of gold and the patience of Job; but he had one of those long noses that took the wrong turn from the start, and went up instead

of down, and his eyes looked different ways, which does not help you with your pretty wife, and stand him up side by side with Larry O'Connor, and the poor boy hadn't a chance. So Mrs. F. said she'd rather get out and walk, and she walked away with Larry and married him, as she called it, when Fitzger'l'd got his divorce.

"Well, Fitzger'l'd had a brother in the town who used to look after his affairs for him and helped him with the bailiffs, and kept his head above water many a time when he hadn't a leg left to stand on, for the poor boy played like the devil, and but for his brother, the children (there were six of them) would have gone to bed with only their prayers for supper many and many a night.

"Well, the brother dies, and Fitzger'l'd, that was over in Ostend, playing to forget his troubles, he comes back (a bit late) for the funeral. But he gets to the cemetery in time to see a grand coffin all over flowers going along, and a lot of people looking mighty sorry, and a lady that he took to be his brother's wife, in blankets of crape, following the coffin. 'Here we are,' says he to himself, 'just in time,' and he falls into the procession with great discretion and begins to cry a bit, for he was fond of his brother and 'twas his best friend. And one of the men says to him: 'We didn't expect to see you, Fitzger'l'd, it's mighty kind and forgiving of you to come!' And he says, 'I never had anything to forgive the poor boy; what d'ye mean?' And

then the clergyman begins to speak and they are quiet till it's all over, and the lady never lifts her veil, and Fitzger'ld is so taken up with his grief for his poor brother, that he never notices another funeral going on quiet and remote in the opposite corner of the cemetery. And when they lower the coffin, his warm heart says: 'We must say a word or two at the grave-side.' So he comes to the front and he says, looking up to Heaven and down into the grave with the tears rolling down his cheeks:

" 'Ladies and gentlemen, my regard, my heart-felt regard for him that's gone, drags these few words from my bursting heart. A Christian, a gentleman, a loyal friend, and a faithful lover.' (Here the poor widow showed signs of fainting away, so Fitzger'ld saw it was going nicely, and he proceeds) 'Listen while I count his virtues and recall his deeds. No false shame shall seal my lips. Many's the time this poor boy has kept my family and myself from want and starvation. But for his generosity, my name would not have escaped obloquy and even criticism! He paid my debts, he supported my family, and the heaviest burden that ever fell upon me, he took it and carried it on his own shoulders, and never reproached me afterwards.' Here the afflicted widow shrieks and faints, somebody grips Fitzger'ld's arm and says: 'For God's sake, man, don't insult that poor creature here!' and when he looks again, they're holding a smelling bottle to the lady's nose, and he sees it was the girl that had run

away with Larry O'Connor, and it was Larry's body lying in the ground, and Fitzger'l'd's brother had no funeral oration said over him at all, being buried quietly in the other corner of the churchyard meanwhile."

"Now, you have buried Larry," said Simon, "you might as well give us the 'Bailiffs and the Great Snowstorm.' It keeps one from listening to the wind any way. Hughie, you'll have bad news from the *Aurora* to-morrow, I'm afraid."

"Total wreck, probably," said Kilmorack; "we'll all go home steerage as British subjects in distress. I believe they keep a fund up in Tokyo for the repatriation of paupers."

"We shall miss the cook," said Simon, rubbing the bulldog's head, "and after that, we'll take with brief thanksgiving whatever meals there be. I knew those dinners were too good to last!"

Simon was quite indifferent as to whether he were eating salt herring or sturgeon, boiled mutton or red venison, but he affected solicitude as to how it was dressed.

"This is the most depressing storm to listen to," said Willie, as the gale shrieked and moaned round the house, "do somebody tell another story! It keeps one from hearing *that!*"

"Well, I'll tell you a story," said Terence, "maybe the others have heard it before——"

"I think it just possible," Simon remarked, "but that is such a good thing, isn't it? One knows

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where to laugh. Wake me up when it comes to the horses, Hughie, I like that part!" And he laid his head back on his chair and pretended to go to sleep.

"Maybe," Terence continued calmly, "you won't think it so good as the other—but it has the crowning merit of truth, and the other is only fact! A fine distinction, my dear young friend. Well, as I said, Fitzger'l'd was often in bad trouble, and nothing gave him so much pleasure as getting out of it and talking about it afterwards. So I'll give you this as if it was himself. You must imagine me with that nose, like Kilmorack's turned upside down, and one eye fixed on you most affectionately, while the other roves round to be sure the whisky's there and the bailiffs are not! Fitzger'l'd had a touch of the brogue in his talk, I don't know if you've ever heard it, but it's what you call distinctive. I'll try and show you, though my own family was always free from any provincial taint of that description.

"Twas the coldest winter of me life," says Fitzger'l'd, "and we had not had a bit of fire in Castle Fitzger'l'd for foive or six days, because if we opened the door to the tradesmen (and they were as shy as partridges in December, for we were far into our second year of credit, and it took the cook's pretty face to coax a joint out of the butcher) then before ever the coals or the meat could get inside, sure there was a writ to show the way! And at last the dirty spalpeens got in, and there they were, one

1 the hall and one in the kitchen, and all the silver under the cook's bed, and five horses in the stables and not a handful of corn in the bin, and the childhren wantin' to know where their Christmas dinner had gone to, for of all days in the year, was Christmas Day! So I says to the two eldest, that was Nora and Patricius (the others had been carried off by my mother-in-law a day or two before): 'There'll be no dinner, Alanna, but we'll have some pretty games instead! D'ye see the snow comin' down?' It was just beginnin' then. 'We do,' says they. 'Well, wait a bit,' says I, 'when it's 1 hour thicker, we'll go for a ride!'

"Meanwhile, I made them bring all the silver bit by bit into the nursery, that looked out on a fruit garden, near the stables. 'Twas only one storey from the ground, and pretty soon I said to Nora: 'Run downstairs, darlin', and see what the dirty man in the hall is doing!' She comes back with her eyesinin' angry, and she says: 'Snorin' in your big air, with your fur coat on and the '54 port at his bow!' She knew the taste of the '54, bless her. I said: 'We'll not misgrudge him the port for once, yourneen, if it'll only keep 'm asleep till we've had a play!' And with that I let meself down by a pe into the garden, and those sweet childhren, they lowered the silver all tied up in towels and timacassars: and in an hour I had it all buried 'e under a heap of manure that the gardener, when we had one, had been keepin' for the plants.

"Now Patricius," says I, "you must come down that rope and get out to the village somehow, and bring big Mike along, and tell him not to say one worrd to any one, for he's got to shoe five horses in the stable inside the hour." Ah, that boy had the spirit of all Tyroen in 'm! He slips out, as quiet as a cat, and back he comes with Mike, who was a kind of half-brother of me own, though he didn't say much about it, and the horses knew he was one of the family, and stood like so many lambs till he'd shod 'em all backwards. Every blessed shoe pointed to their nose instead of their quarters.

"And when 'twas all done, he helps me get little Nora down, laughin' like a crazy thing for the grand joke, and we put her up on the mare, and Patricius on the black, and Mike rides one of the carriage horses and leads the other, and I on the chestnut that won the St. Leger, and away we go, soft and slow, and not one soul in that house ever finds out till the next mornin', and by that time the horses were safe in Mr. Desmond's stables, twelve miles away, and meself and the childhren had a most agreeable visit, for we stayed with our kind friends till our enemies gave us up in despair. But they dhrank every blessed bottle of port, and one of them married the cook. Poor gurrl, she felt lone-some afther we'd gone, I suppose!

"The silver was a bit tarnished, but me jewel of an uncle died just afferwards, and I bought some plate powder out of the ten thousand he left me,

nd Mike always gets a thumping cask of whisky on Christmas Day! 'Ye see,' went on Terence in his own person, 'that was after his wife left him. The poor fellow had picked up some spirit again, and when I last saw him his eyes were all but straight. 'Twas the strain of looking after her that brought on the squint.' "

"Terence," said Simon, "you are a walking contradiction of your own theories. I never heard you tell a story to a woman's credit, and I never saw you pass one without trying to make her look at you!"

"Tis an ennobling sight and can do her nothing but good!" replied the other. "What is it one of the philosophers said? 'I shall pass this way but once, let me do all the good I can!' Oh, Lord, here comes the see-saw business again!"

The house was rocking slightly, and the lamp began to mark time for another earthquake shock. They all started to their feet, a circle of strange figures, wrapped in any dry thing they had been able to find. Kilmorack, in a blanket draped magnificently round him, looked like a Roman emperor in difficulties, except that the long glass in one hand and the cigarette in the other struck an unclassic note. How much those poor old Romans lost by not knowing the joys of tobacco! All their perfumes and baths, their huge greedy feasts, and amazing cruelties, and abominably vulgar display, would seem so inadequate to take the place of the

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universal solace which we moderns have at will. How hard it is to make friends with a man who never smokes! How much less revolting one's enemies appear, when seen through that gentle cloud!

"We are in the proper costume for earthquakes at any rate," said Willie Barnes, "they always seem to come just as people are going to bed or getting into their baths, or something of that kind! Ah, it is over, it was just a little parting kick, and now we shall not have any more."

"Have you lived through many visitations?" inquired Simon, who had at last made room for the bulldog in his deep chair.

"Dozens," said Willie, "I know all their tricks now. But the funniest thing is to see a whole hotel full of foreigners rush out at an alarm. There was a bad shock a little while ago up in Tokyo, and at the Grand Hotel people shrieked and tried to jump out of the windows. One man was just ready for his bath, and he behaved with great presence of mind—he got his tall hat on to show his good intentions, and came flying downstairs with a six-pence in his hand calling for a jinrikky to take him to Yokohama. But nobody minded! People are too frightened to be shocked. I saw a funny sight once in our compound. One of the men is fearfully nervous, and sleeps with his window open so as to get out at the first jump. He is a bit of a martinet, too, intensely proper, and very stand-of-

fish with us youngsters. Just after I came we had a good rousing shock at about seven in the morning, and the first thing I saw was Murray, climbing up into a palm-tree, in his pyjamas, with his eye-glass in his eye, while his fox terrier sat up on its hind legs below, begging to be taken up too. They say palms have such strong roots that they never fall. He sat there for an hour, and had to be lured down with drinks and things. How we did laugh! It took a fortnight's holiday to restore his dignity!"

So the night wore on, till even Terence could not talk any more, and dropped asleep in his chair; then silence prevailed, only disturbed by the snores of the bulldog and the diminished moaning of the gale. At last, that died away, but the rain still fell persistently, and it was a very dark grey world that Marna saw as she pushed back a shutter early in the morning.

She felt none the worse for her adventures of the night, and was quite ready for more in the same company, if they might but be dry ones.

"How are the ladies, Také?" she asked, when her maid brought the early tea. "Have they called for you yet?"

"May I come in?" said a voice at the door, and Betty stood in the entrance, her black hair tumbled in loose curls about her shoulders, her complexion fresh painted by sleep, her rich kimono falling freely away from her white neck and full round bosom, and held together in front by a plump hand

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with very pointed fingers. She might have stood for one of Sir Peter Lely's Beauties at Hampton Court.

"Come in," cried Marna; "have you slept at all? I am sure you must have been horribly frightened."

Marna had gone back to bed, and was sitting up against a pile of lace-trimmed pillows, drinking her tea. Betty perched on the other end of the bed, in her favourite attitude, a little accentuated by the scanty drapery of the Japanese gown, drapery which seemed a mere detail compared with the never-failing open-work stocking and pointed slipper, to which it gave more than fair play. The two girls made a sharp contrast; black-eyed Betty did not lose by it, though Marna looked enchanting with her hair all standing out in gold rings round her head, her hazel eyes still misty with sleep, and all her soft, white coverings heaped cosily round her—for the morning was chilly.

"Well," said Betty, "since you mention it, I *was* scared! I didn't know before what 'funk' meant! But I am all right now, or would have been if those men would have let me sleep. How they chattered! Did you hear them?"

"Rather!" said Marna, "one hears everything in these wood and paper houses. One cannot wash one's face or open a drawer without having everybody know all about it. You look as if you had slept round the clock, as fresh as a rose!"

"I always do," said Betty, "I shall have red

cheeks when I am dead, I am sure! It is such a pity, for nobody believes one has a heart! May I have my tea here? It is so nice to have a girl to talk to!"

"Let us make friends!" said Marna. "I am going to like you, I think! Také, hold my cup!"

Then she shook hands with Betty, and they both laughed. After which Betty's breakfast was brought on a tray like a lotus leaf, with a flower growing out at one side to hold the tea-cup; and the friendship—that easy delight in a new-found playfellow, which is part of one's youth—proceeded over the toast and marmalade, while Také sat on the floor and waited for orders.

"I wish you would stay!" cried Marna, "I have been horribly lonely up here, and I simply longed for another girl to run about with. Nothing is any fun when you have to do it alone!"

"I should love to stop," said Betty, "I have been travelling with the others so long that we are all quite sick of each other, and ought to separate—but all my things are down in Nikko. You see I'm wearing your kimono; I hope you do not mind?"

"It is so becoming that I ought to make you a present of it," said Marna, who always wanted to give people everything they admired. "Please take it! I look such a fright in red, and I always buy it, because I love the colour!"

"You *dear!*" said Betty, leaning forward to shake

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hands again, at imminent risk to the two tea-trays.
"I shall always keep it for your sake."

"Now you must make me a present," said Marna.
"Send your people away and stay up here two days with me."

"I would," said Betty, "only I am—— May I tell you a secret? You won't tell anybody?"

"Nobody; honour bright!" replied Marna.
"Is it an engagement?" she went on, looking rather wistful, "that is the most interesting kind of secret they say."

Betty smiled triumphantly.

"Of course it is!" she exclaimed; "there's nothing like it! Have you ever been engaged?"

"If I had been, I should be still," Marna answered. "We Scandinavians think an engagement nearly as binding as a marriage. It is very rare to be broken off."

"How narrow-minded," laughed Betty. "I have been engaged—in a way, you know—to somebody or other ever since I was thirteen. And the man I am going to marry—yes, that is it, you guess rightly—is the only one I ever cared the least little scrap about! I wish you could see him."

Why Marna brightened up at this last sentence was not explained.

"What is he like?" she asked, her eyes shining kindly.

"He looks a perfect beauty, to me," said Betty, "but I don't know whether you would call him that."

handsome. He isn't a Greek god with a London tailor, like Simon, or a peer like Kilmorack, but he is just the best chap that ever lived, *and* such a sportsman."

"You lucky girl," said Marna, "I do congratulate you. When are you going to be married?"

"Hush," cried Betty, as footsteps were heard in the passage, "there's my mother, and she does not know."

Také pushed back the door in answer to a knock and Mrs. Mowbray appeared.

"I heard you talking," she said hurriedly, "so I knew I should not be waking anybody up."

"Come in," said Marna, while Betty nodded an unceremonious "good-morning" to her parent; "we are wide awake, any way. Have you had some tea? Také, new tea make. Sit down," and she pointed to a cane chair.

Mrs. Mowbray waited till the maid was gone. Then she approached the bed and, with an expression of comic despair, drew out what appeared to be a nicely cured scalp from the folds of her kimono, and held it up before the girls' eyes.

"Naturally curling invincible fringe, three guineas!" she exclaimed. "Look at it, Betty! How am I going to get down to the hotel?"

"Oh, Lord!" said Betty. "Haven't you any irons you could lend us?" she asked, turning to Marna.

"I never use them," said Marna. "But why wear that horrible thing?" she asked, smiling up at Mrs.

Mowbray, who, with her nice dark hair parted and lying smoothly on her forehead, suddenly became a young old woman instead of an old young one.

"One could not show oneself like this," she replied; "why, I have always said it was a natural wave."

"So did Auguste when he sold you this," cried Betty, making a face at the wreck. "Who in the world cares, mother, if your hair waves or not? Do you suppose Kilmorack and the other men make notes of all the fibs you tell? You look much better without it. I'll come and do your hair for you, and Terence will say you look like a 'pe-ri.' Now, run along and play, I want to talk to Miss Schmidt."

"Come soon, then," said her mother, as she moved away unwillingly.

"What did you call me?" asked Marna, as soon as she was gone.

"Isn't that your name?" Betty inquired. "I beg your pardon if I made a mistake. Kilmorack—"

"Call me Marna; that is my Christian name, and much prettier," replied the golden-haired girl; "I will tell you the other when we have done talking about your engagement. How does it feel to be engaged?"

Betty's face softened, and her eyes shone almost tenderly. She hesitated a moment, and then replied:

"It is rather hard to say; but when it is the man

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you really cared about all along, and you thought you hadn't the millionth part of a chance of getting him, and he suddenly writes to say he is coming out to fetch you—well, it's about as near to champion, perfect happiness as anybody could hope for."

"You lucky, lucky girl!" cried the sympathetic Marna; "I wish I could see him! When is he coming?"

"Any day now, he may turn up," replied the other. "Perhaps I shall find him in Nikko when I go down. If so, *what* a fuss there is going to be with my respected mamma!"

"Why?" asked Marna. "Isn't he—all right?"

"He's righter—no, nobody could be 'righter' than Kilmorack, though he has got a bad temper—but Harry is as right as all the Scotch peers the Lord ever made. But he is poor—compared to some people, that is all."

"Did your mother—did Lord Kilmorack want to marry you?" asked Marna, suddenly sitting up straight and handing her tray to Také with a stern expression.

"He did not!" cried Betty, jumping up too. "I've often tried to make him propose, just to have the satisfaction of refusing him, but it was no good. He hates me like poison, and last night he heard me say that I would not marry him if he were the only man in the world. That was awfully good for his conceit, and he is frightfully conceited—and we had a row, and now we shall be the best of friends.

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I never like people much till I have had two or three fights with them."

"When shall we begin?" asked Marna, holding out her hand.

"You are a new experience," exclaimed Betty "I never make friends with women, but you are simply *champion*."

And much to Marna's surprise, Betty threw her arms round her neck and kissed her on both cheeks. "Now!" said the lively damsel, "I am going to do my mother's hair, and in the middle of I'll make her consent to my engagement, on pain of looking like a frump all day."

CHAPTER X

"It is all very well, Betty," said Mrs. Mowbray; "but there is no necessity to go and get up an intimacy with Miss Schmidt. At the best, she seems to be a person who takes paying guests. I wonder how Kilmorack will manage about the bill."

"You have a little clump of white hair on your temple," remarked Betty, as if that were an answer to her mother's words.

"You merciless girl!" replied Mrs. Mowbray, laughing, "what has that got to do with it?"

"When *my* hair turns white, I hope I shall still be able to tell the right sort of people from outsiders. You may be sure Kilmorack can. He is an irritating wretch, but he does not often make mistakes."

"It looks as if he had made one this time, though I must say they both carry it off extremely well—horrid sly creatures! But, Betty, who, *what*, is 'Willie?'"

"I know—at least I don't know," Betty answered. "I grant you Willie. He wants explaining."

"Could she have run away with *him?*?" mused Mrs. Mowbray. "If so, Kilmorack is uncommonly forgiving."

Betty's clear, loud laugh followed this speech.

"Why, mother," she said, "he is a perfect babe! He cannot be more than nineteen. It would indeed have been a case of her running away with him! She would almost have had to carry him. When I am with her, I can *not* believe that story! If ever I saw a real, jolly *girl*, it is Marna Schmidt. There is nothing of the married woman about her. She asked me how it felt to be engaged!"

"Well, I give it up," said Mrs. Mowbray. "Terence seemed to be telling the truth for once, and what should he have invented the story for? It was before dinner, remember. I fancy she is only extra good at covering up her tracks! Do find out what Kilmorack does about paying, Betty! It will be amusing."

"There," said her daughter, standing off to admire her handiwork, "you look so nice; and, really, the white place hardly shows at all. What time can we get back to Nikko? I think the rain is stopping. I am expecting Harry Winstanley up to-day or to-morrow, and you had better make your arrangements for going back to England independently of us, for we shall want to travel alone."

This was Betty's gentle way of breaking the news to her mother. Poor Mrs. Mowbray took it gallantly, pretending to think it was meant for a sparkling joke.

"I am glad you can laugh about him now," she said; "you had a merciful escape. Fancy, if that had happened after you were married!"

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But her eyes watched Betty very anxiously while she spoke.

"I wish to goodness it had," responded the girl; "it would have saved us the bother of fussing about in consulates and places, as we shall have to do now."

"Good gracious, my dear," cried her mother, "you cannot be serious! Harry disappeared completely, and he is not the kind to come up again, such a scatter-brained, extravagant fellow as he is."

"He has come up again," said Betty, "and before I have done with him he will come out on top. He has made—a little money, and he is coming out here to fetch me. There is no earthly good in refusing your consent, you know, mother—I always do what I like in the end."

"Oh, Betty, Betty!" moaned Mrs. Mowbray, "what a selfish, unkind child you are. How am I going to face Madame Finetaille? You know it was all for your sake—and hoping you would make a good marriage—and just the few things we brought away ran the bill up two hundred pounds, at the very least. She will take it into court the day we land."

"Mother, look here," said Betty, standing before Mrs. Mowbray, who sat wringing her hands, "ever since I was seventeen, you have been talking to me about a good marriage, and I have listened to you, and done my little best to follow your advice. I have dressed and danced and flirted; I have thrown

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myself at rich men's heads, and all but proposed to them, more than once; I have done every mean, dirty thing that you suggested, because you were always rubbing it into me that there was no other chance or way—I must marry money, or I should be wretched all my life. By some extraordinary accident, I did fall honestly in love with one man that you made me try for, and he went broke, and if he would have had me I'd have married him that day, and have scrubbed and cooked for him all his life. But he wouldn't have me, dear old Harry, and I thought he didn't care, and I came back to the sickening old game, and tried to marry Kilmorack.

"For Heaven's sake, don't talk so loud," exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray, looking round nervously.

Betty went on in a lower tone,—

"I've simply swallowed dirt in pecks to please you, and to try and pay those disgusting milliners' bills for things we had no right ever to put on. And what has it landed us in? The house of a woman they say Kilmorack married years before we ever knew him. I've had enough. It has been borne in upon me that I am a gentleman's daughter, and even if I am never to speak to poor old father I should like to feel that I *can* shake hands with him if we ever meet. It is not your fault that I am not a lost girl. You would have let any man who came along pay my bills and yours, and you know very well they don't do that for nothing."

"What an atrocious thing to say, Betty," cried her mother, starting up.

"It is perfectly true, and you know it. You wanted Ansell to take me over to Paris and give me things, and you pretended you would come the next day. Thank God, I was wide awake enough to keep honest. You have not helped me. Now I am going to marry Harry Winstanley, God bless him, and we will go our own way and you go yours. I will try and give you enough to keep you from starving, but he shall not start life with our cursed old bills round his neck. Now you know."

And Betty began to do her hair, her hands shaking and her cheeks flaming. Hard and rough as her words were, they did not overstep the truth.

Half an hour later, Marna came downstairs, wondering how many people there were in the house, who had had breakfast and who had not, and why she suddenly found herself moving in a chain of events that had the grotesque yet logical absurdity of a dream. The first person she met was Kilmorack, who promptly turned his back to the light. He had a silk handkerchief tied round his neck instead of a collar, and he had not shaved for twenty-four hours.

"Good morning," said Marna, who, as usual, carried Rep under her arm, and looked irritatingly clean and tidy. "Have you had any breakfast? I am afraid everything is very much disorganised."

"I have been beautifully taken care of thanks,"

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he replied. "I don't know what to say about your kindness to us all. You have saved our lives all round."

"I was so glad of some human companionship through the storm," said Marna, "it would have been awful here, alone. As it was, it was rather fun, was it not?"

"It was something much better than fun," he answered, and then he looked into her eyes with a little unspoken question in his own.

Marna was silent, and appeared much occupied with Rep, who opened his pink jaws and yawned rudely in Lord Kilmorack's face.

"I am going down to Nikko," said the young man, venturing to pat the dog's head. "I am afraid I shall find a wire from my skipper to say that something has gone wrong with the yacht. It did blow a bit last night."

"And if you do," asked Marna, looking either at Rep's head or the hand that caressed it, "shall you have to go to Yokohama?"

"I am afraid so," he said regretfully. "I don't want to. I am tired of the *Aurora* and everything that belongs to her, I think. I want the mountains—and pine trees—and all that sort of thing just now. Isn't it odd?"

"Were you never conscious of those tastes before?" she inquired, looking up quickly.

"No, never!" he asserted, as if something important were proved by the disclaimer.

"Then there is not any doubt about it," she replied.

"About what?" he asked.

"It must be the typhoon. It has the most amazing effect on some things."

"I would like some more typhoon," he sighed. "One gets to know people so well in emergencies, doesn't one?"

Marna wavered a minute, and the dimple began to tell tales. Then she drew herself up a little stiffly and said: "I do not know that that is always an advantage."

"I don't know that it is," said he very grandly, and turning away. "Good-bye, and please accept all our thanks. Oh—wait a minute—I ought——"

He turned very red, and all his dignity melted away in embarrassment.

Marna looked surprised.

"Well," she said, "what is it?"

He flushed redder and redder, hesitated, and at last gave it up in despair.

"Nothing, nothing," he cried. "I will write to you about it as soon as I get down to the hotel. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," she said rather ruefully. "Don't be cross. I hope the yacht will be all right."

"Cross!" he repeated. "Is that what I seem to you? I am the most bothered, harassed, worried man in the world. I cannot help feeling cross, but I did hope you would not notice it."

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"What is the matter?" she asked, opening ~~her~~ eyes very wide. "Can I not help? I know ~~the~~ country. I might do something, or get my ~~father~~ to help you."

"If you know the country," said the young ~~man~~ in low tones, "help me to find a comfortable and remote spot where I can maroon my ship's ~~company~~. I have just found out that there's only room for two on board the *Aurora*, and I brought eight. Does that say anything to you?"

"What should it say, except that you have changed your mind?" she answered, laughing a little shyly.

"And haven't you the faintest idea when it began to change?" he asked.

She did not answer for a moment. Then her lids drooped, and she shook her head.

"May I come back and tell you, some time?" ~~he~~ whispered, for some one was coming down the passage.

"If—you—very much—want to," she murmured.

And then she turned round and disappeared, with Rep wriggling madly under her arm.

"Did you ask that sweet creature for the bill, Kilmorack?" Terence inquired; for it was he who approached. "You'll remember the millionaires are all down in Nikko, and this end of the brigade has never learnt the Japanese currency, and has but

one purse, which should be in your pocket, my revered young guardian angel!"

"I am considered a bold man when nothing is happening, Terence," Kilmorack replied, "but not for the Victoria Cross would I ask Miss Schmidt for her bill! There's more mystery, and it becomes more 'elegant' every hour! There's fifty dollars—it is all I have in my pocket, and it is soaking wet still, but I daresay the boy won't mind. You give it to him."

"Is it Willie you mean?" asked Terence. "I fancy somehow that 'Willie' is a gentleman!"

"Very much so," replied his friend. "I mean the other individual, with heraldic animals on his coat—the servant. Get the women down to Nikko for me, like a good chap, and tell Simon I will leave some funds with Ansell for you all. I am sure I shall have to go and look at the *Aurora*. Last night would have smashed up the Ark!"

And away he went, swinging down the hill at a great pace, for in spite of what he had said to Marna, he loved the *Aurora* dearly, and had visions of a golden-haired, brown-eyed girl walking up and down her white deck at his side, with nobody but King Tom to watch them. So far, he had never set his heart on anything without getting it sooner or later. The vision grew more distinct as he raced on, leaping down slippery short cuts, and rejoicing in the fresh, wet air. By the time he walked into

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the hotel, the vision looked as if it might become a reality.

Meanwhile Marna's guests prepared to follow, and at about ten o'clock gathered on the verandah to start. They did not look quite so trim as they had done when they left Nikko, but the morning was glorious now, and everybody, except Mrs. Mowbray, was in high spirits. She was still profoundly depressed, and also uneasy because Kilmorack, the paymaster, had gone on, and she did not know what arrangements he had made.

"Good-bye, Marna," said Betty, looking radiantly happy, "and thank you so much for everything! If we stay on in Nikko, I will come up and see you—and bring Harry, perhaps," she added, in a whisper.

"I daresay we shall meet to-day," replied Marna. "I am coming down a little later to lunch with a friend at the hotel."

"I shall look out for you," said Betty, and then she started off, with Simon on one side of her and Willie on the other. Mrs. Mowbray shook hands with Marna in a condescending way. She was not at all pleased to hear Betty calling her by her Christian name.

"Ah—good-bye," she said. "We have been *so* comfortable. I should have stopped a day or two if we had only had our boxes. Lord Kilmorack will settle the account."

"What account?" asked Marna, looking puzzled.

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"Oh, the—account for everything, you know," Mrs. Mowbray answered, and then hurried away, as not to have to see the servants whom she saw the background.

"What a strange, ill-bred creature," Marna retorted, looking after her. "I could not remind her my own doorstep that nobody asked her to stop lay or two, though I would take Betty for weeks. e is kind and jolly, but the mother! And what earth did she mean about the account? It must ve been for the kagos and coolies that they sent this morning, when they decided to walk wn."

Then she went to dress for her visit to the chess of Friedland, and tried to remember the urs of the trains. It would be nice if Kilmorack i not yet started by the time she got down the

It was a little late when Marna entered the hotel, the quick long walk had brought the colour to cheeks and rebellion to her hair. Madame de hr was waiting for her on the verandah, and car- her off upstairs, raising the curiosity of the rora party who watched the meeting from afar. five minutes the duchess came down and passed to her own dining-room, leaning affectionately Marna's arm, while Madame de Behr and the tlemen followed. Marna caught sight of Betty the door of the public dining-room, and smiled nodded to her. Terence and Simon gazed at

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the little procession, and then Terence officially gave it up.

"That beautiful young woman ought to be published with authorised notes, like the Bible!" he exclaimed. "At present she is quite beyond the powers of private judgment to pronounce upon."

"I fancy," said Simon, in the chaste, impersonal voice with which he always related any compromising story, "our charming hostess is probably a natural daughter of too susceptible royalty. Her relations don't mind speaking to her out here, and she is allowed to put a nondescript crown on her smelling-bottle as long as she keeps it in Chuzenji."

"We know something a little different to that, eh?" said Terence in a low tone to Mrs. Mowbray. He suddenly remembered the story he had told her, and realised that his negotiations for disruption were not getting on as fast as he had expected.

It takes the greater part of a long day to reach Yokohama from Nikko. Kilmorack got to the port late in the afternoon, and put out in a boat to the yacht. The wire had reported a damaged propeller and a boat washed away, and in any case he would have wished to have a look at her after the gale. A good deal of damage had been done in the port, and some of the mail steamers and warships looked as if they had just fought an engagement.

A harbour boat was lying alongside, and when Kilmorack ran up the gangway, he found a stranger holding converse with Captain Tucker, his

skipper. At once the pair approached, and Tucker explained that this gentleman was a friend of Miss Mowbray, and had come to inquire where the party might be found.

"My name is Winstanley," said the newcomer, a light, wiry, little man with keen grey eyes and a reddish moustache, "and I have just arrived. My steamer was fearfully knocked about in the gale, and we were hours late."

"I think we have met before," said Kilmorack, shaking hands, while an expression of great content suddenly spread over his features. "Don't you remember? It was at Liverpool, the year Fidelis won the Grand National."

"Of course," replied Mr. Winstanley, "we had both backed Rosenkranz. It pretty nearly finished me up, but you took it very calmly, I remember."

"Come downstairs and have a drink!" said Kilmorack, cheered by the sight of this fellow Briton fresh from home, and divining in the question about Betty an easier solution of his perplexities than he could have hoped for half an hour ago. He remembered the story of her engagement to this man, before he was ruined. Winstanley looked prosperous enough now.

"You must stay on board to-night," said Kilmorack. "Are you alone, or travelling with a party?"

"I am alone—now," said the other, with a happy laugh.

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"Lucky man!" sighed Kilmorack.

"But I do not think I shall go back alone," Winstanley went on; "I came all this way for the mere pleasure of returning to England with a friend."

"That is what one might call devotion," exclaimed Kilmorack. "Who is it? Any one in my party?"

"I hope so," Harry replied; "I mean, I hope we shall manage it. I wonder if you would mind helping me to arrange my business a little?"

"With all my heart!" exclaimed the other. How sincerely he spoke, and how much more likely it seemed that Mr. Winstanley was about to help him!

"I ought to tell you," said Winstanley, flushing a little, as Englishmen do when they have to explain themselves to acquaintances, "I had to lie pretty low for a couple of years, I was very hard hit that time, and other things came along and finished it. But I knew I should have my luck if I just sat tight, and now it has come."

"Very glad to hear it," remarked Kilmorack; "everybody was extremely sorry about your misfortunes."

"People were no end good," said Harry; "Down and one or two other men offered to club and set me on my feet again, but where was the use? It did not look as if I should ever be able to make it good to them, and I wouldn't take it. I went and worked in a Training Stable in the Curragh, and one day I

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saw a farmer kicked into a cocked hat by a game little mare he was riding. I knew the man. He sold us forage. He started to abuse the mare, and I offered to take her off his hands. I bought her for an old rifle and ten pounds, which I didn't pay for three months. Do you know that mare's name?" Winstanley leaned forward and his eyes shone with triumph.

"Perhaps I do," replied Kilmorack, "tell me."

"Her name is Miss Betty!" exclaimed Harry, "and mine in print is *Le Pareilleur*."

"I do congratulate you," cried Kilmorack heartily. "What a bit of luck! Why you must have made a fortune."

"I mean to make a few more," said Harry, with decision, "but the first thing I want to do is to make the original Miss Betty Mrs. Harry Winstanley. Do you think I can manage it in this strange place?"

"Rather," replied Kilmorack. "Does she know you have come?"

"She is expecting me," said Harry, "because I wrote by the mail before I left, and addressed the letter to the *Aurora*. But I did not know just where to find you all, and came here to ask."

"I will take you up to Nikko with me if you like," said Kilmorack, "only I must wait till the day after to-morrow. There are things to be seen to or the ship."

Winstanley looked disappointed. It was three

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years since he and Betty had parted, and an extra twenty-four hours at the end of three years means a great deal.

"You ought to be seeing to papers and passports and things, anyway," remarked Kilmorack; "you will put in to-morrow very wisely if you attend to all that."

"You are right," replied the ardent lover, who looked as unromantic as a railway ticket, "but it would have been jolly to see her directly, you know."

"If I can get through my business early," said his host, "we may manage it. I should rather like to get back too," he added, looking across the bay towards the north, where, though he could not have hoped for such good fortune, a very foolish girl, in a lonely cottage among the pines, had found an old cigarette case that he must have dropped; it contained two damaged visiting cards inscribed with his name, and some calculation of English and Japanese money scribbled on the back of one. And when the golden head was laid on the pillow that night, Lord Kilmorack's cigarette case was under it.

Marna found the little house very lonely when she returned, but not sad. She had had a happy afternoon with the Duchess, who scolded her roundly for entertaining unknown people off yachts, until Marna was able to explain that only the horrible weather had got up the party, and that charity forbade their being sent away in the storm.

"And really, madame," she pleaded, "the girl is nice, so much nicer than she looks at a distance. I should like to ask her to come and stay with me —without the others," she added, suddenly flushing a little.

"My dear child," said the Duchess, "I can see only one thing to be done. Either we must engage a qualified chaperon for you, or your good father must marry that lady at once and provide you with one in that way. You are just the kind of girl to get into the most impossible situations, through a combination of motives which, taken one by one, might come out of the Sermon on the Mount, but which, put together without discretion, would end by spelling—scandal."

Marna looked very penitent, for she had confessed to her picnic and all the rest of it, and had smiled encouragingly on Willie from the verandah where they were sitting. He was watching her from afar at this moment, so as to walk up the hill with her when she started to go home.

"Willie is such a good boy, madame," she said, "and he writes to his mother every week now, and is going to give up cocktails and play, because I asked him to."

"And what business is it of yours whether he does or not?" asked the Duchess, laughing at Marna's earnestness. "There are plenty of people, nice old clergymen, and mothers, and older men, who can show young gentlemen the path of duty!"

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Nobody expects dear pretty girls to go about reforming gay bachelors."

"Don't they, madame? I thought one ought to do all the good one could in the world," Marna replied, on the verge of tears. "I wish I were old and ugly. It seems as if being young just stops off everything that is worth doing!"

"You dear little goose," said the Duchess kindly. "Don't you see it is only because you are sweet and young that they care for what you say? Those are only temporary reforms, carried out to please you. And when the Mr. Willies have fallen so deeply in love that they cannot help telling you about it, and you have had to send them about their business without the slightest hope that you can ever fall in love with them, they will go back to the cocktails and the cards with more perversity than ever. They will want the distraction, and they also want you to see all the harm you have done. It does not seem as if your convert were a very sincere one yet. Look there!"

Marna was sitting on a low stool at the Duchess's feet. She glanced down through the lattice and saw Willie pouring out a generous dose of whisky into a long glass, under the ineffectual screen of his newspaper. Both she and the Duchess laughed, though Marna felt more inclined to cry.

"You are changed, my dear," said her friend, looking down into the beautiful eyes, where lights and shadows chased each other like sunbeams in

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allows of a brook. "What has come to you, ' You look like a rose in the rain. You were m a day or two ago, and now you seem sorry you laugh, and laughing when you are sad. have you found up there among the pines?"

Marna forgot all about her friend's rank and the nce of age between them, and she suddenly laid buried her face on the Duchess's knee, her shoulders heaved, and a deep, slow, crimounted even to the tips of her ears under the ls of her hair. Then she lifted her face, laughd crying, and said:

"I am afraid—it is—love."

ring thus announced her defeat, she buried her big cheeks once more on the motherly lap and or joy.

oft hand was laid on her shoulder, and the less bent silently over the lovely head, while er own eyes came that tender pity with which er woman sees that the girl's hour has come already turning to prayer that the young may go unbroken to its grave; a look made ful by its utter unselfishness, terrible by its intance with grief.

chess Thyra stooped and kissed Marna's hair. "ay He be merciful to you, my dear."

CHAPTER XI

BETTY had decided that she must have an ally. Simon de Fresel was only a supporter, and his admiration of her, tepid as it might be, would prevent him from being very enthusiastic in the interests of Harry Winstanley. Simon had never yet been able to face the whole of a love affair. Half-way through, he was apt to decide that the thing was turning out less interesting than he had hoped, and then, if some more ardent lover stepped in, he gave up his place, with the famous bow. The lady was made to understand that, if she had the bad taste to prefer passion to good manners in her admirers, he had no desire to dispute her ruling; but he hovered about her in an impersonal way, as if to watch her downward career, and the woman thought she had made a lifelong friend, and used him unmercifully whenever he could be useful. Ornamental he always was, and, after all, that is something in a world where automobiles may any day become the fashion, and Eiffel Towers set the note in architecture. Betty liked to have Simon beside her when she was on parade, but for real utility, Terence was more to be counted on, and to Terence she went an hour or two after they all got down to Nikko.

Mrs. Mowbray was resting body and mind in a well-earned siesta. The Ansell's and Mr. Brandon, having received a message from Katsu, the guide, early in the morning, had set their minds at rest about their fellow-travellers, and had gone off on some little excursion by themselves; and Betty invited Terence to come and talk to her in a corner of the billiard-room.

"Terence," she said, "I want you to stand by me. I am getting ready for such a grand fight!"

Terence's eyes clouded a little. "Is it with your mother?" he asked. "You know my devotion to you, darling, there's nothing you could ask that I wouldn't do for you, but don't go and fight poor Mrs. Mowbray! She's a kind soul, and when women are not young and lovely like you, Betty, they take things more to heart, and it's harder for them!"

"I believe you have got the best heart in the world!" said Betty. "Why, it was only the day before yesterday that she cheated you out of five pounds, and you pretended not to understand, you dear old humbug! You are the most chivalrous man I ever met! And it is a virtue that is quite out of fashion, I can tell you." Poor Betty had had occasion to make that discovery in her somewhat piratical career.

"No," said Terence, pleased with her tribute, "I do not go out of my way to fight women's battles, which is what I suppose chivalry would dictate. I

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always says to myself, the pretty ones will get all they want, bless their sweet faces, and the ugly ones are such grand fighters for their rights and their privileges, and the eternal superiority of the feminine gender, that one poor man more or less wouldn't be worth their counting, and it's a great comfort to me to think that though I have lived my life (and I've been no saint), at least no one can say that I ever made friends with ugliness! All the women I ever loved——”

“Stop, Terence,” cried Betty, “I know all about the lovely creatures, and just now I really must talk to you seriously. I don't want to fight poor mother, though I do get fearfully angry with her sometimes—but I know she is going to fight me, and you must stand by me!”

“And what will she be fighting you about, alanna?” asked Terence, getting hold of Betty's hand. “Of course I'll stand by you! Who is the man? I knew you did not care two pins for Kilmorack, and that's a lucky thing, too!”

“I never cared but for one man in the world, besides you, Terence,” said Betty laughing, “and you may be sure it wasn't Hugh Rose of Kilmorack! He is a good, honest enemy, though, and if it comes to fighting, there's a good deal in that! As for you, I really believe that if I had met you first I should never have wanted to fare farther, for you are as true as they make them, and I love a good laugh as much as you do! But you remember, don't

you, what I told you once about Harry Winstanley?"

"A dear boy," said Terence. "Ah, that was a sad pity! His bark went down in a sea of insolvency, and the ocean roars above it."

"Well, it has come up again," said Betty, "right side up, too, with some nice fat fish for ballast. One is a mare, called Miss Betty——"

"No!" cried Terence, "Miss Betty that won the Grand National?"

"That same," said the girl, "and a little trifle of fifty thousand pounds—and my old Harry as true as ever, and as ridiculously in love as he was three years ago. Terence, he is just getting here, to marry me, do you understand, and I am the luckiest girl in the world. Isn't it wonderful."

Betty's black eyes were quite moist and tender, and she had entirely forgotten to show off her feet.

"And you have been caring for Harry all this time?" asked O'Brien, with a face full of delight and amusement.

"Straight along," she cried. "I wanted to marry him the day he went broke, and I have wanted to ever since. All the peers in England under one coronet, and all Gillett's Bachelors in their parkiest clothes would not make me change my mind. But mother is going to fight to the bitter end, in the hope that the man I marry will be rich enough to pay all her bills. Harry is not, and if he makes millions, he never will be, for I won't have it. And

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when she sees it is no good, and she has to give in, then she will want to compound for a smart wedding and five thousand people to be mulcted for wedding presents, and my gown in all the papers. No, thank you! My life has been poisoned by gowns, and I will have no more till Harry makes me a present of one. I mean to be married in this frock at Yokohama, and Harry and I will go home by ourselves on a cheap line and—you have got to arrange it *all* for me."

Terence paled. "My sweet child," he protested, "Hercules couldn't do 't. Your poor mother would never get over it. Ah, if there were but some good man of her own age that we could marry her to meanwhile. But there's not, and you must consider the pangs of her maternal heart. Come, Betty, a nice, pretty wedding at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge (that's where you young heretics mostly get married, isn't it?), and a white satin train and orange blossoms. Ah, you're not the girl to sacrifice your orange blossoms, I know. Your old Terence would dream of you till his dying day."

"My old Terence will have to help me run away then," said Betty resolutely. "If you cannot persuade mother to let me be married as I like, Harry and I will just bolt without saying a word to anybody; so take your choice!"

"Run away, Betty," Terence implored, "and I will help her to bear it afterwards. Don't lay a crushing burden on your best friend!"

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"Very well," said Betty, "only you must help me in the running away. We'll see what Harry says. Come and have a game at billiards."

"Oh, the beautiful dispensations of indulgent Providence!" said Terence, as he rose to follow her, "why couldn't I trust in the justice of Hughie's cause? Why did I go to support it with extraneous inventions?"

"Isn't there a straight cue in Japan?" asked Betty, squinting down the warped length of her weapon. "This describes figures of eight! What are you grumbling about now?"

"If you had opened your heart to me a week ago, Betty, you'd have saved my reputation from the disgrace of a very poor lie that I'd be ashamed of at home, and that I've no doubt I'll have to pay for, quite as heavily as if it had been a good one! It is a waste of resources! But there, I am glad you're happy, and maybe we'll have a laugh or two yet!"

"It wouldn't be you and me, if we didn't!" she answered, "and as for Harry, they say he laughs in his sleep. Play up!"

While Marna was having adventures in the mountains, affairs were being precipitated in Yokohama. She had taken no notice of Mrs. Adair's letter, of her father's engagement, or of Mrs. Hayes' entreaties that she would try and look at matters in a more sensible light. She had succeeded in putting the whole thing out of her mind while other excitements were occupying her, but once more

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alone in Chuzenji, the fact of her father's approaching marriage rose up very large before her eyes. She had so far conformed to the Duchess's wishes that Willie was forbidden to accompany her on her homeward journey, and she went up, only followed by the Japanese servant whom she had brought down in the morning. She was extremely tired when she at last reached the cottage, and sat down on the step in the spring twilight, looking rather ruefully at all the havoc wrought by the recent storm.

Také came and silently removed her shoes, and the dogs looked reproachfully at her because she had left them behind. Everything was quiet, except for the sound of swollen brooks leaping down through the woods, and the lazy breaking of the ripples on the shore. Most of the landing-stage had been carried away, and Marna suddenly remembered that her boat had been left to founder at the other end of the lake the day before.

With much zeal, the servants had removed all traces of the recent army of occupation, and inside the house everything was in its place. Marna rather crossly pulled one low chair out into the position it had occupied when last used, and then she sat down to try and write to her father. Mrs. Adair's letter must be tackled in the morning, when she felt fresher.

But when she had taken her pen in hand, Marna found that there was nothing for her to say. On a

matter like this, her conscience was at one with her impulses in forbidding untruth; and untruthfulness was never one of Marna's temptations. She had been too happy and too much loved to grow up a coward, and if she ever told a fib, it was done for pure fun, without the slightest necessity, and was perhaps therefore the more inexcusable. So she began by telling her father about the storm, and the distressed foreigners, and the Duchess of Fried-land's kindness to her, and got to the fourth page without mentioning Mrs. Adair. Then she sat for a long time drawing circles on her blotting-paper, and the ink dried on the pen; and then Rep's ad-vice was asked, and he shivered, and remarked in his own language, that it was always better to say yes to everybody, as long as they didn't actually steal your bones. Bobby the bulldog lay curled up on the edge of Marna's dress, wondering how much time she meant to waste on trifles before she began the real business of the evening, throwing tennis-balls for him to run after. And when Marna turned to her paper again, there was a little minia-ture of her mother that she always kept on the writ-ing table, a fair, calm face, with smooth hair wav-ing away from the honest forehead over the loving eyes, all a great contrast to the frizzed and battered prettiness of the "person in mauve."

Marna could not bring herself to accept the proposed stepmother, so she did the very worst thing there was to be done; she ignored her, and

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ended up the letter without even mentioning Mrs. Adair's name. And since she could not say kind things and would not say unkind ones, she gave up all thought of writing to her. When this point was reached she told herself that she had been kind to her father and spared her enemy, and that she was doing all that any one had a right to ask, in refraining from any attempt to stop the marriage.

But her silence on the subject was virtually a declaration of war, and as such the major took it. He was a man of hot temper, as kind and jovial people so constantly are, and he was very angry when he got to "your devoted Marna," and saw what all the omissions meant.

"Very well," he said to himself, "if the girl deliberately cuts herself off from my affairs, she must bear the consequences. The affairs will go on without her, and if she cannot behave pleasantly at home, she can go back to her aunt in Copenhagen. She has plenty of money, her mother's fortune makes her richer than I am, and I will not be ordered about by my own daughter. I will marry my dear Emily next week!"

But "dear Emily" demurred at any sudden measures. She would marry the major, yes, but not with the prospect of disagreements and bickerings in the near future. She took a day or two to think things over, and arrived at an ultimatum which filled her suitor with dismay. He had not suspected that the gentle woman, who always agreed to

everything he said, possessed such a force of will when something more than opinions were concerned.

"I have quite made up my mind," said Mrs. Adair, "and, believe me, I am thinking of nothing but your happiness, my dear friend. You know how much I have done to try and win poor Marna's affection. I should have loved her tenderly if she had allowed me to do so!"

"I know," murmured Monsieur de Wesloff, taking Emily's hand and trying to kiss it.

She drew back with some dignity.

"No," she said, "I do not consider myself engaged, until things are settled, and they must be settled in one of two ways. Either Marna comes forward and behaves pleasantly and affectionately to me, as I have every right to expect, or Marna goes home. Otherwise, greatly as it will grieve me to lose you, our engagement is at an end."

And Mrs. Adair leant back in her chair and smoothed out some little frills on her dress and watched the major from under her eyelashes.

He was much disturbed. He doubted greatly whether Marna could ever be brought to fulfil the first condition, and he saw himself already having to choose between the two persons whom he loved best in the world, and who were, as he felt, equally necessary to his happiness. The choice made, he must remain a broken-hearted lover or a bereaved father for the rest of his life. He saw it all quite

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clearly. Half an hour before, he had told himself that Marna might go back to her aunt, but the proposition sounded very differently, coming from Mrs. Adair.

"Pray do not say that," he began at last; "Marna is only a child! She will soon learn to love you when once we are married and she sees there is no way out of accepting the fact."

"She is less of a child than she was when she came, nearly two years ago," replied Mrs. Adair, "and she has not got far in learning to love me yet, has she? No, I am afraid I must stick to what I have said. I am quite willing to start afresh with her, but she must bring real goodwill to the task. You will tell me when you and she have decided what is to happen; and now you must excuse me, for I am very busy to-day."

Then Emily held out her hand, and the major was dismissed from his paradise with a clear intimation that he need not return to it until he could report progress. The poor man went away looking quite old and tired.

He was having a new experience and a very unpleasant one. Till now in his dealings with women, whether in his own family or outside of it, he had only been called to single combat as it were, and had generally come out victoriously; he now found himself between two angry, hostile women, who could only reach each other through him. He would not be spared in the process, and all the petting and

caressing he would certainly receive from the victor after the battle was decided, would hardly make up for the dreadful knocking about that he must suffer while it was going on. Mrs. Adair watched him go down the garden walk with something like a smile on her face. She was rather pleased at the turn things were taking; nothing would suit her so much as to have "poor Marna" returned with thanks to her relatives in Europe, and she was not troubled by any scruples about the morality of separating the good major from his child. Mrs. Adair was sure he would be far happier with her than with that headstrong, erratic girl; and, really, Marna was so selfish.

Selfishness is one of the many objects which we can only focus with precision at some little distance from ourselves.

Marna's father was much disappointed that Mrs. Hayes's assistance had proved useless, and he feared that after all he would be obliged to go up to Nikko and reason with the rebel maiden, since she would not come to him. He hoped that at the worst some little compromise might be effected. Marna might go home for a few months' visit and return when time had enabled her to get accustomed to the novel idea. After all, it had come upon her suddenly; they must give her a little grace. Emily was the sweetest of women, but she must also consent to be reasonable.

"Emily" did not dream how much she was risk-

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ing by her courageous decision. In the end ~~the~~ good man whom she was trying to coerce, would sacrifice his inclination for her, rather than his duty to his daughter. Women never quite gauge their power over men. The strong women under-estimate it, and the weak ones strain it recklessly. Things are probably so arranged in order that some few chances may still be preserved for the male in the already unequal battle of the sexes. I have seen women fail when honestly trying to make men happy. I defy the strongest man in the world to be happy against the will of his womenkind.

Major de Wesloff's life experience had taught him several useful things, and one of these was the advantage of waiting. Matters have a way of arranging themselves, truly amazing to one who watches them do it, and half the catastrophes in private life are caused by the impatience that wants to settle everything at once. If the unready ones are sometimes seen looking for "noon at fourteen o'clock" as the French say, a far greater number are breaking their hearts because they cannot persuade the sun to rise at midnight. Why will he not come up? It would be such a saving of time to get it all done with, they cry.

But people who conduct business or official affairs, learn the value of patience, and Major de Wesloff showed great penetration in the course he followed at this juncture. He went up to stay with some friends in Tokyo for a few days, leaving his

vice-consul in charge, leaving Mrs. Adair in doubt as to his whereabouts and Marna in uncertainty as to whether he had received her letter or not.

Kilmorack and his guest were just sitting down to dinner in the spring twilight which is so refreshing after the first warm day. Marna's snowstorm was winter's farewell which she came back to repeat, like a pretty woman, just to hear what people were saying of her after they thought her gone. And now the Japanese spring had laid its flush of fuller beauty on that most lovely land. The words that our Lord addressed to tired souls, earth there seems to repeat in a humbler way to our tired eyes, saying: "Come unto me, ye weary ones, and I will give you rest," the rest of perfect beauty, and remoteness, and peace.

The warm deep blue of Japan's Gulf Stream (she calls it "Kuro Shiwo" or "Dark Salt") circles in mystic constancy round the Islands of the Dragon Fly; their shape indeed recalls the sweep of heaven-cleaving wings, their colour is warp of rose and amethyst, woven to its woof of emerald by the sunbeam's flying shuttle of gold, till the moister days let down cool mist in veils that wash all the tints away; and the mist rolls by in a thousand dreamy shades of white, ghosts of colour, that only have names of their own in Dai Nihon, names that tell of the purity of cold new blossoms, of tossing foam, or moonbeams seen through waterfalls, of drowned white violets or the zenith's crystal where the sky

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burns pale above the sun. Then come shadowy greys, cool and kind at first as promised sleep; but soon they go rolling up in masses of swelling cloud, dun-coloured, bronze-hearted, velvet-dark at the edges, piling higher and higher as they come tumbling up from the sea, till the whole sky is full, and at last the storm-rose bursts and we are drowned in the on-slaught of the rain.

Pray heaven that it come before the double cherry has laid her boughs of rose-white blossom like wings of brooding doves upon the land! One storm sends all their pinions fluttering far away, and you must wait till another year to see them settle again.

All the windows were set wide in the *Aurora's* dining-room, and little lapping sounds came up, broken by the louder splash of passing oars now and again. It was a beautiful room, though it was but the saloon of a steam yacht. Kilmorack knew what he liked, and all the tints were delicate and fresh. White ceiling and columns, where the reflections from the water outside came up in a dancing network of light, soft blues and greens below, the colour of a wave on the turn. Over the piano a long panel picture was set, of a glorious Atlantic roller breaking full in the sun, the work of an artist of Marna's country, who takes the sea, and lives at sea, and paints the sea as no living man besides can paint it. Happy the few who have one of those long canvases signed "Henry Brockmann!" He

seems to dip his brush in the brine and to steal jewels from under the waves to mix on his palette, and he gives you to keep for ever something better than a picture—a bar of that cold, crashing music that marks the time of the world.

Kilmorack had a happy moment, when he re-entered his sea drawing-room on coming down from the hills. Like other people with dark grey eyes, he had fancies in colour, and the right or the wrong note made a great difference to him. He glanced round questioningly, and then smiled and patted his dog's head. The pale blues and greens seemed to harmonise with a picture he had in his mind; the blue was Marna's blue, with a dash of both sea and sky in it. The setting would need no altering for the picture.

"Where have you been?" the dog's eyes seemed to say; "I can see you have found somebody you like better than me!"

"Only a little, old boy," said Kilmorack; "just wait till I show her to you!"

After dinner, chairs were placed on deck and the two men sat smoking silently as the stars came out one by one, and all the ship's lights danced and floated on the water. Kilmorack had asked all his questions about home matters at dinner, and now both he and his guest were glad to follow each his train of thought. Considering that one had been in love for some years, and the other only for some few days, they were surprisingly similar.

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Towards ten o'clock, a boat pulled alongside, and a moment later a third figure was added to the group.

"Hallo, padre, is that you?" said Kilmorack, as Father Andrews stood before him. "I thought you were up in Tokyo, talking to bearded missionaries!"

"So I was, till this morning," replied a cheery voice; "but I wanted half a dozen things I had left on board, so I came down to fetch them. How are you? How is everybody?"

He was a slight, tall man, dressed in the unchangeable black coat and trousers of the priest on his travels. He had so far yielded to exigencies of climate as to leave his tall hat at home, or in his cabin, but that was all.

"I am so glad you turned up," said Kilmorack, "let me introduce you—Mr. Winstanley, Father Andrews."

The two shook hands, and Father Andrews pulled forward a camp-stool, and lighted a cigar.

"How is Terence?" he said. "Has he converted Miss Mowbray yet? He hoped to have done it by the time we got to Singapore, but it did not come off!"

"You had better talk to Mr. Winstanley about that," replied Kilmorack, laughing; "he is a very old friend of Miss Mowbray. May I tell?" he asked, turning to Harry.

"By all means," exclaimed Mr. Winstanley, "I

will announce it myself. Then turning to the other, he said: "I have come out to try and persuade Miss Mowbray to go home with me instead of with Lord Kilmorack's party. In fact, we want to get married!"

"I congratulate you," said Father Andrews with a stiff little bow. He had not been pleased by Betty's candid attempts to attract him. She, poor girl, had no more idea of Father Andrews' stand-points than she had of those by which Captain Tucker navigated, and she had run about after him for a few days merely for the fun of the thing. Then, finding herself checked at every advance by an invisible wall of division, she gave it up, and satisfied her sense of humour by teasing him a good deal, and showing him in absurd lights whenever she could manage it. One rainy day in the Straits, when there was absolutely nothing to do, she had gone so far as to dress up, in one of her smartest frocks, a very fair presentment of herself, stuffed with rugs and pillows, and had posed the creature kneeling devoutly in the padre's cabin beside his bunk; then she had posted herself, with Mr. Ansell for a confederate, in an adjoining passage, whence they could watch the result.

That had been something of a surprise to the sprightly damsels, for without a moment's hesitation, Father Andrews picked up the dummy and shot it out through the port hole, sending a stray limb, clothed in open-work stocking and patent

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leather slipper, flying after it. He never referred to the affair, nor did Betty; she had a short cry over the lovely gown and new shoes, and treated him with marked respect afterwards.

He was glad to think that he should not be obliged to travel fourteen or fifteen thousand miles home in her company, and after a minute or two entered with friendliness into Mr. Winstanley's perplexities as to how to "put things through."

"You will have to go to the consulate and ask," said Kilmorack. "I believe they are supposed to do everything for us there. They will probably marry you out of hand on the spot."

"But that is not a marriage!" cried Father Andrews, scandalised.

"I brought a license," said Harry; "why won't you marry us here on board? That would save us no end of trouble."

"Are you a Catholic?" asked Father Andrews quickly.

"I can't say I am," replied the cheerful young man, "but I don't know that I am anything else in particular! No reasonable offer refused!"

"I am afraid you must go to the consulate," said Kilmorack, who would not permit any nonsense *on* some subjects, "it is quite near the Bund. The flag was floating away finely to-day."

"Talking of consuls," said Father Andrews, "*I* met one up in Tokyo—the Danish consul, *I was* told. Such a good sort! He gave me no end *of*

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nformation about things to see, and so on. He asked me to come and pay him a visit next week, here in Yokohama. But I want to get up to Nikko while you are about there, Lord Kilmorack. It is worth seeing, is it not?"

"The most beautiful place I ever saw in my life," replied Kilmorack, with profound conviction.

CHAPTER XII

THE first thing Mr. Winstanley did in the morning was to send off a wire to Betty to announce his arrival in Yokohama, and to say that he would join her the next day. Betty was thrown into a state of triumphant agitation by the news, which she at once communicated to Terence, and they had a long consultation as to whether Mrs. Mowbray should be told or not. Betty was for telling everybody she met; she never was inclined to be secretive, and her happiness had come so unexpectedly that it had swept her off her feet. But Terence advised caution, and undertook to sound Mrs. Mowbray on the subject and to come back and report to her daughter how she appeared disposed.

“Maybe she will do it for me, when she’d not consent for your asking, my dear,” he said. “I have a good influence on Mrs. Mowbray, as I always have on women! No woman can be much with a noble-minded, warm-hearted man, without trying to meet him halfway, and of all the women I’ve loved and lost (and I have not been unloved, Betty), none were ever the worse for knowing me! I am a poor creature, but I’ll offer my strong arm to your mamma to lean upon, and maybe I’ll bring

her to your wedding, with a smile on her lip and a tear in her eye!"

"For heaven's sake, take care what you are doing, Terence," Betty said. "If you are so rash as to offer mother strong arms to lean upon, you will find her leading you to your wedding, and the smile will be on her lip, and the tears will be in your eyes, every time!"

"And what would she be doing that for?" asked the astute negotiator, "when she knows my paternal inheritance was confiscated in the time of my martyred great-grandfather, and it's only every other generation of O'Briens has been able to look even its laundress in the face ever since—barring she was a pretty woman, ye understand!"

"You manage to look pretty clean!" retorted Betty. "Do they all get up your collars for love?"

"As a rule, my child, as a rule, and the integrity of my intentions goes a long way. Once they look me in the eyes, they know I would pay them if I could, and women have kind hearts even if they do clear-starching! But nobody will ever disturb my peace by tryin' to marry me. I don't recollect ever being proposed to in form, and I don't recollect ever proposing either. I always began by giving the lady a kiss, and if she seemed to like it, she got more, and after that where was the good of proposing? It ended badly once—but as a rule most of them had accepted somebody else first. Ah, Betty, the ag'ny of 't! Although you are but a girl, you've

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a warm heart—think what it is to a man to have to pass his own child in the street and never take her——”

“Him!” interrupted Betty. “You never get them straight. Why will you make yourself out a kind of Don Juan. I don’t believe you ever did a wrong thing in your life, and that’s why I like you so much. Now, Terence, do be a good, dear creature, and stop talking about misplaced affections, and run along and see what you can do for me with mamma. There is no time to lose. We have only got twenty-four hours, so we must make up our minds.”

Very unwillingly Terence went to seek Mrs. Mowbray, who had not yet appeared that morning. When he knocked at the door of her room a sharp “come in” answered his summons, and he entered to find Betty’s mother standing in the midst of all her own and Betty’s properties, which she appeared to be repacking. Nobody had any sitting-rooms, because there were none, and in the exigencies of travel, the sanctity of a bedroom was not much respected.

“Why, what is the matter?” cried Terence, looking with surprise at the endless feminine properties scattered over floor, and tables, and chairs.

“Never mind,” said Mrs. Mowbray, who appeared to have come to some life-and-death decision. “I will tell you by-and-by. What is it you want?”

Terence felt that something dreadful must be happening, for all her suavity was gone, and she seemed not to care that her costume was the old skirt kept for packing in, and a tumbled dressing-jacket.

"I want half an hour's talk with my kind friend," he said, in his most engaging manner. "Leave these trifles to menial hands, dear lady, and come, pour balm on a weary spirit that you've taught to look to you for comfort."

"Comfort!" she repeated scornfully, "what do you know about wanting comfort? I want a little! I want a maid to see to things—that woman of Lady Cecilia's won't put in a stitch for me, and I want a good, obedient child, or none at all! Betty is trying to break my heart, and when she has done it she will be sorry. But I won't give her that satisfaction. I am going to take her home. There's a steamer sailing for Canada on Wednesday, and we will go in that."

"Do you know what it costs?" he asked with a sudden change of tone.

"What is that to you?" she cried, turning round fiercely. "So long as nobody asks you to pay for it! Do you know, you are very insulting, Mr. O'Brien! I am busy, please go."

But Terence would not be put off.

"You are making a grand mistake, Mrs. Mowbray," he said, "and if you will just drop those lengths of ribbon and listen to me you will be of my

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way of thinking in a quarter of an hour. You are a clever woman—what is the best thing in the world?"

"Money," she cried; "you know that as well as I do!"

"There is just where you are wrong, my dear," he replied. "God knows, I have had little enough all my life, and I have been an idle wretch and never learnt to make any. But the biggest happinesses I ever had were not bought ones, and I have been a happy man."

"Men are always happy," said the poor woman. "Who cares whether you borrow from your friends, whether your friends pay your bills or not? It is no disgrace to you, or you get over it if it is. We are handicapped a hundred times over, and then people howl at us, if we don't get home."

"And that is true," he replied, seeing signs of softening in her face, "but there's one thing you can always do, pull out in time when you know you are beaten; and look sweet at the conqueror afterwards, and there's no knowing what he'll do for you."

"I don't know what you mean!" she cried, giving up her attempts at packing, and sitting down in despair. "I am just in a condition for smiling at a conqueror, am I not?" And she covered her face with her hands, and seemed to be near tears.

"He has not arrived yet," said Terence, "and when he gets here, you will have had time to do

your hair, and put on some of those pretty things, and upon my word, Mrs. Mowbray, when you do, you'll run your daughter very close in the way of looks. A smile takes ten years off a woman's age —after she's five and thirty, say. And my advice would be to go part of the way down the hill to meet him, as Jacob did when he was so mighty frightened of Esau, and, seeing you are Betty's mother, and she'll not be there yet, he will open his arms to you, and you'll have made him your friend before you have spoken a word. He is a generous-hearted boy, is Harry, from all I hear. And when he knows through one of your devoted friends, and that's myself, that you've a few little matters troubling your repose, maybe he'll settle them up, and never say a word to Betty about it. What do you owe? Tell me now, and see if I can't help you to an advantageous compromise."

"It is just over two thousand, I believe," wailed poor Mrs. Mowbray. "Oh, Terence, if you could get that paid for me, how I would bless you! Betty once married, I would live all right on my bit of an income. It has been all for her sake, all for her sake!"

"And doesn't she know it now!" exclaimed the diplomatist, "was she not saying to me this morning, 'Ah, poor mamma, I fear I have been worrying her, and after all, she has been a devoted parent. You go and cheer her up, Terence.' And now that is what I think I can do, my friend, cheer you up. I

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don't believe two thousand will make a penny of difference to Harry just at this particular moment. He has been earning a pound a week, I take it, for something like three years, and his beer thrown in, and the boy will feel as rich on—four thousand, say—as on six, coming to it from nothing at all. I have no doubt it can be managed."

"But, Terence," she said, "what is to become of Betty? She cannot live on two hundred a year, she'll break her heart. Oh, why did Kilmorack make that idiotic marriage, and never have the sense to get divorced when the girl left him? It would have been so suitable."

"Well, you see, divorce is not the fashion in our Church, and between you and me, I do not think that 'suitable' arrangement would have come off, if Betty and Kilmorack had both been as free as air. Betty wouldn't have him, and he wouldn't ask her. What is the use of crying over it? Here is Harry Winstanley with a bit of money and the brains to make more; and a sensible sweet woman like you ought to hold out her hand to them both and give them a chance of inviting her to stay when they have made their own home."

This was an alluring picture, and there was no controverting the good sense of Terence's remarks.

"I wonder if you are right?" sighed Betty's mother. "You see it will all turn on what Harry is willing to do for me! And I cannot know until I have given my consent. I can't sell Betty to him,

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as it were, for two thousand pounds—and suppose he refuses to help me afterwards?"

"That is just what you will make impossible by your kindness to him first," Terence replied, with much decision. "The man is, I mean will be, off his head with happiness, and ready for anything. And upon my word he owes you something. That crash that finished him was more than a bit his own fault, and there was poor Betty, with her wedding gown bought and everything. It might have turned out a bad thing for the girl, and anyway it has postponed her settlement in life. Harry Winstanley will see things from the right point of view, I'm pretty sure, Mrs. Mowbray."

"If you really think so—" she began, looking at him wistfully, as if afraid to hope too much.

"Leave it to me," said Terence, "and I'll show you how gratefully I can appreciate all your kindness to a lonely-hearted man. Put away all those things, and put on one of your pretty frocks and come down to tiffin. And I'll take it upon myself to tell Betty that your maternal heart rejoices disinterestedly in her approaching happiness."

"You might as well tell her that you have saved my life, for that is what it comes to if you succeed with Harry. You are a good friend, Terence, and I feel better, a great deal better. It puts some kind of hope into the future at any rate!"

Terence came back, well pleased, to tell Betty of his success. She was not informed of the secret

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clause in the treaty, and was surprised and delighted at her mother's sudden reasonableness, as she called it.

"How did you bring her round, Terence?—do tell me," she pleaded.

"What's the use of being an Irishman," he said in his soft old brogue, "if ye couldn't beat the devil at his own game, and talk a woman out of her tantrums? When the serpent made himself so dangerously agreeable to Eve, Betty, you may be sure there was a touch of the brogue on his dirty tongue, and though there's no record of his address I fancy he called her "acushla" at the start. It would account for her losing her head a bit."

"Well, you have done wonders," Betty cried gratefully, "and if I were the Queen, I would make all my diplomats conduct their negotiations in Irish."

"You run along and help your mother pack up your things," said Terence, "her room looked like remnant day at a shop. And she's tired. I've put her into a good temper, you go and help her to stay in it."

Then, as Betty went away to follow his advice, he murmured: "I am the last man to say this world would not be a dreary desert without the women, but what a lot of bother the dear creatures do make!"

It was amazing to Lord Kilmorack to find that any man could be so wildly in love with Miss Mow-

bray, that every five minutes' delay in their meeting counted as an insupportable trial. Perhaps he knew after all very little of Betty and of love. He had come to regard the girl as a smiling foe, laying twenty traps a day for him; and he was sufficiently human to feel irritated at having been made a fool of, whether by Betty's love of teasing, or his own alert conceit, he could not tell. How Terence and Simon would laugh at him—they, to whom he had complained more than once, he remembered, of the directness of Betty's attacks! And all the time she was engaged to this short, rather ugly, red-haired man, for whom she had been waiting three years, while he was doing a groom's work in a training-stable!

It was sportsmanlike, at any rate, and he began to feel that perhaps the girl was a good deal to be respected after all. Harry, who had no reserves, asked fifty questions about her, all testifying to his profound faith in her beauty and goodness. Kilmorack tried to throw some enthusiasm into his answers, but found it very difficult. Father Andrews listened with a puzzled expression, and at last gave it up. He considered Miss Mowbray a most objectionable young woman, and felt thankful that she was soon to disappear from the *Aurora* circle.

Kilmorack could not bring himself to go to bed that night, and, long after the others were asleep, paced the deck, smelling the soft longshore

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smells—smells of tar, and fresh sawn pine, and aromas from the great tea storehouses, aromas stronger than anything else in Yokohama; smells, too, of oiled sampans, and strange foods, and wafts of perfume from miles of fruit trees in flower—that combination of odours which marks each great port, so that the old traveller could tell blindfold, whether you had put him down in Singapore, or Rio, Yokohama, Hong-Kong, or Messina, where the violets' breath greets you three miles out at sea in the spring. Why is the spring the true season of perfumes? One hardly notices them in the summer, but even the Sorrento sailor will speak of the *odor di primavera* along his enchanted coast.

So Kilmorack, who had lately been weary of too much companionship, lingered alone, not thinking exactly, but getting face to face with himself, so that thinking, clear and true too, would follow in due time. Many people get on very far in life, some quite to the end of it, without ever classifying themselves, if one may use a clumsy term. And yet from time to time it is a useful exercise. We are apt to run in grooves into which we turned by accident, without ever stopping to ask ourselves whether they are the ones for which we are best suited. They are smooth, and beaten, and after all, it is fairly easy going, and we toddle on stolidly, without ever looking over our shoulder to see if there is any other way for us. On the other side of the hedge we might

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have wings for the asking, but it would be too much trouble to put them on.

Kilmorack had found life ready made, and until within the last two or three years had never had a doubt as to its value. But of late a feeling, which he would have called staleness, had begun to creep over pleasures and occupations followed for no reason but that they were attractive or amusing. He had not discovered in himself any special gift to be developed; his fortune was a large one, but it did not place him in the ranks of the millionaires, who seem to dance close to the world's footlights to amuse it with their postures and their whims. He had not even the distraction of a seat in the House of Lords, having no particular claim to be placed among the peers elected to represent Scotland in the Legislature. Ten years ago, on coming of age, he had felt that life was all before him; now he often thought he would not care if it lay all behind. Destiny had treated him as some wealthy mothers treat their children. She had filled both his hands with expensive gifts, but had not stopped to play and laugh with him; and the gifts seemed valueless, and he felt lonely.

I wonder if the sentence of toil laid on Adam was such a curse after all! It makes the possession of small things hugely precious when one has worked for them; and, without it, great wealth often seems like uncut diamonds. The value is there, but where is the sparkle and the beauty?

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But there are one or two other things besides honest work, which can coax the sealed gem of life to give out its radiance, and the chief of these perhaps is congenial companionship. Hugh's experiments with people, and his rather sad clinging to the only two who had stood the tests, Terence and Simon, were so many attempts to find the companion he needed. He had not roughed it enough to have much knowledge of character; when people disappointed him, he put them down on the long list of "stale" things in life, and, after a time, tried again. His eternal demand for "freshness" was a genuine one, but he had not the least idea how to satisfy it, and was fain to take thankfully such odds and ends of novelty as came his way by accident.

He was in truth humble about himself, and had an undefined feeling that the mind and heart of him were just those of the "ordinary josser," and quite unworthy of special study or provision. In external things he was inclined to be touchy, but in his soul he gave himself no airs. When women tried to marry him to their daughters (or to themselves) he resented a homage given entirely to his worldly advantages, and taking no ray of interest in him as a man. He had made friends with poor Betty, and invited her and her mother to come on this trip before he realised what Mrs. Mowbray hoped from it. Betty was full of fun and chatter, and it was only when he was shut up with his guests day after day, at sea, that he grew so weary of their society.

There is nothing like a sea voyage for testing the quality of one's acquaintances.

On examination it was found that the injuries sustained by the yacht in the storm would take more than a few days to repair, and Kilmorack saw in the accident, taken in conjunction with Mr. Winstanley's arrival and probable marriage, a fairly good excuse for breaking up his party. The An-sells were going to Canada in any case, and Brandon meant to give himself four months in Japan before writing a history of the country from the earliest times, with a critical introduction to the Japanese language, art, philosophy, and present status generally. Mrs. Mowbray could hardly propose to return to Europe as the only lady on board. So Kilmorack consoled himself for the heavy expenses of repairs and all other present annoyances by the vision of approaching freedom and peace. He had already a fairly clear idea of how he would employ it.

Harry persuaded Father Andrews to come with him on his rounds of inquiry in the morning, as he did not know his way about, and the two started off to find out how far a consul could help a well-intentioned man on his way to matrimony. When they got to the British consulate, everybody was out at lunch, and they were requested to return in an hour.

"Let us go and look up my Danish friend," said Father Andrews, "he asked me to lunch with him

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if I stopped here long enough. I daresay he can tell you as much as anybody else."

"Good," said Harry, "and then we must visit the shops; I can't go up to Nikko empty-handed."

Major de Wesloff had returned the evening before, and they found him drinking kummel at the club. He was glad to have a couple of strangers to talk to, so as not to answer the questions of his old acquaintances about the date of his marriage. The engagement had been announced by all the gossips in the place, and now they wanted something more to tell. As matters were at a standstill just now, the major preferred not to talk. He gave his guests a very good lunch, and showed himself quite ready to help Mr. Winstanley with his advice.

"You will have to be married in the consulate, or you can go to Church and bring the consul there if you like. His presence is required to make it legal, that is all."

"Couldn't you witness it instead?" asked Harry, who had taken a great fancy to Major de Wesloff.

"No, it must be your own shepherd," the latter replied, "but I am entirely at your service in every other way. I am coming up to Nikko to see—somebody, and I hope you will present me to the young lady."

"Good," said Harry; "I shall look out for you there."

On returning from Tokyo, Major de Wesloff had called to see if Mrs. Adair were in a more yielding

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frame of mind than she had been a few days before. He found an empty house, and the servant told him that the lady was in the mountains "all same Nikko way my speak." Her admirer wondered whether she had gone to discuss the matter with Marna in person. There was no saying what women would not do—he had better join her and try to prevent any too pronounced hostilities.

By the time they all met in the station the next morning, Harry had doubled the bulk of his luggage by a whole cargo of crapes and ivories, gold fan-brooches and lacquer boxes to lay as bridal offerings at Betty's feet. He had also engaged a servant to travel with him and act as courier and interpreter. The others watched him with much amusement and a little sympathy. It was good to see the poor fellow blooming out again in his unexpected prosperity after having taken his reverses so pluckily.

"You don't know what it feels like," he confided to Kilmorack. "All the bored people who grumble that there is no fun in life ought to go broke and then get straight again. There is nothing like it for a sensation; especially if the best girl in the world has been waiting for you all the time."

"Is it very fresh?" Kilmorack asked seriously. "Suppose the best girl in the world had got tired of waiting?"

"What could one say, except that one was served jolly well right for being such a fool as to risk los-

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ing her?" said Winstanley. "But there, you see—she waited."

And Harry beamed at his cigar, the landscape, his companions—anything that came within his love-illuminined vision.

"You are a very happy sort of man, it seems to me," said Kilmorack.

CHAPTER XIII

"AND are you Mr. Winstanley?" asked Terence, shaking hands with the young man on the platform at Nikko, where the sacrilegious railway has cut through the famous cryptomeria avenue for the fourth time. "Will I walk up with you then? I have some messages from a lady, and by the time we get to the top she will be waiting for you there, she says."

"Very well," said Harry; "only, won't it delay me in getting up, if I walk?"

"The coolies would have to walk and pull you too," replied the other, "it is too steep for them to run. We shall get there first now."

So traps and servant were piled into the jin-rikshas and Terence started off at a swinging pace, with Harry by his side.

"I know all about it," said Terence, after a minute, turning and looking into his companion's face, "she is a good, kind girl, and no mistake, and you'll find her prettier than ever."

"She was the prettiest girl in London when we said good-bye," Harry answered. "Now tell me about things. Who else is with them? I feel so out of it after all this time."

"Well," Terence replied cautiously, "after Miss Betty comes Miss Betty's mamma, and she ought to

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be considered mighty tenderly, for she has been a true friend to you, Mr. Winstanley."

"Has she?" said Harry, looking pleased and surprised. "In what way? I am very much obliged to her, I am sure."

"Well, I am not saying," Terence declared, with his most candid and indulgent expression, "that Betty (you mustn't mind me calling her by her Christian name, she's like a daughter to me, that should have had one of my own about her age)—well, Betty has been most faithful and true, there's no denying that. But, bless you, she's young, and there were times when hope deferred made her bright spirit droop, and you know how many admirers she always has, and some of them were rich, and very pressing. And she didn't know you would ever come back, and it is just possible she might have said 'yes' to some man that would give her a home, poor child; but there was that good Mrs. Mowbray, always saying to her: 'Don't look at him, my child. You know where your heart is, and all the millions in the world won't make up to you for betraying that. Be true to the true love, Betty, and it will make you happy at last. Charlie will come back—'"

"But my name is Harry," said the young man, looking quite touched at Terence's improvisation.

"I mean Harry—of course, it is my mistake," Terence went on. "Harry will come back and you will marry him in the end; rich or poor, what

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does it matter? You'll have the best thing in the world, and that is love!" "

"No?" cried Harry. "Well, she is a good sort! Poor Mrs. Mowbray, I had no idea she was so staunch as that!"

"And it has not been without heavy sacrifice," said Terence. "You know they are not rich, and what with taking care of Betty, and giving her a little amusement to keep the poor child's spirits up, and warning off the wealthy suitors that would have come poaching on your preserves, and would have been only too glad to buy Mrs. Mowbray's assistance by settling a nice little income on her, when once she was their mother-in-law—well, the poor woman has got a little in debt, and this morning she was crying bitterly about it."

"Poor soul!" said Harry sympathetically. "I know what that means, though I didn't have the relief of crying over it."

"Tis but a trifle," said Terence airily, "a matter of two or three thousand pounds. I'd have lent it to her myself, but that I'm a little short just now. Of course, she has not told Betty; she would not cloud the sunshine of that young heart with miserable matters of money at this glad moment, but you will find Mrs. Mowbray a little depressed. She never owed any one a sixpence before and she is taking it sadly to heart. It almost takes the joy out of your coming, and Heaven knows she'll be glad to see you!"

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"Why, I will lend it to her," said Harry. "What is three thousand when you've just made fifty? I am going to make some more fifty thousands, too—I have learnt a few things in my adversity, and I shall get back all I had and more, one of these days!"

"I am sure you will," Terence assented; "you've got a lucky face, and pluck enough for an army. And when you have your dear, pretty wife by your side, it will be all the world for you two, or I am mightily mistaken."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said the impulsive Harry, "you explain it to her—I shan't want to talk business for the next few days, you know. I'll just tell my bank to put three thousand pounds at Mrs. Mowbray's disposal, whenever she likes to draw on it, London and Westminster, Knightsbridge Branch, just by Tattersall's—there it will be! And I am jolly glad to be able to do anything for her and you may say so!"

"You are a sportsman," Terence replied admiringly, "and I am glad to have made your acquaintance, Mr. Winstanley. You cannot imagine the pleasure it will give me to carry out your commission. Now we are on level ground, and if you'll get into that perambulator the coolies will run you up to Miss Betty in no time!"

Terence had the discretion to stay a little behind and leave Harry to dash up the steps of the hotel

alone. Betty was waiting there for him, her eyes dancing and her face flushed with happiness.

"My dear, dear old Harry," she cried, running down to meet him, "have you got back to me at last?"

Harry's answer was not given in words. He took her into his arms before everybody, and kissed her triumphantly on both cheeks, to the scandal of all the coolies and hotel servants. Then they stood looking into each other's eyes for a moment, and to Betty it seemed as if that kind, good-natured face were the only one in the world, while Harry found time to think that she was prettier than he remembered her. Then she drew him in, and they disappeared to have their talk in Betty's favourite corner of the billiard-room. It lasted quite two hours, for there was so much to say, and no one could grudge him a little conversation after three years of silence.

Harry seemed to have brought enough happiness with him to cheer up the whole circle, and hardly since they left England had the *Aurora* party had such a delightfully gay dinner. Terence gave Mrs. Mowbray her little bit of good news while Betty was telling Harry how glad she was to see him, and the poor woman came down afterwards all smiles looking quite her handsome self again, and ready to receive the congratulations of the party on Betty's engagement. Harry's greeting to his future

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mother-in-law had real tenderness in it, and hers to him was illuminated by the gratitude of an overwhelming relief. As Terence watched the little scene, he tried to remember some Bible promise to peacemakers. Whatever it might be, he felt that he could put in a substantial claim to the enjoyment of it.

The rewards of good actions are not always meted out on the spot, and Terence had to wait a little for his. Meanwhile something seemed to cloud his gaiety in the middle of dinner; Mrs. Mowbray, who was his neighbour, following the direction of his eyes, saw a lady and gentleman sitting at a small table at the far end of the room, apparently engaged in a very interesting conversation. The man, middle-aged, stout, handsome, was pleading his side of some question at great length, and the woman, who had her back to the other table, seemed to be replying by negative gestures more than by anything else.

"Who are they?" asked Mrs. Mowbray.

"The man is a foreigner," Terence replied; "he came up with Kilmorack to-day; but it is the lady —oh, my dear friend, can you tell me if she has got grey eyes and a thin, straight nose? I cannot perceive from here. 'Tis a life and death matter to me, I assure you!"

"Why?" asked Mrs. Mowbray, in much surprise.

"Oh, don't ask, there's a good creature!" he

egged. "I'll tell you after dinner—can you not see her nose at all?"

Mrs. Mowbray made a *demi-volte* on her chair, her pocket handkerchief, which had suddenly flown away and down to the floor. When she turned her face to her companion she nodded reluctantly.

"Then," exclaimed Terence in his most tragic undertone, putting down an untouched glass of wine, "I am a lost man!"

"Is it the 'bark' or one of the peris?" inquired Mrs. Mowbray, who was in great spirits to-night. She looks all right, beautifully got up, nice figure, hair properly done—what is the matter with the poor thing?"

Indeed Mrs. Adair, who had invited Major de Wesloff to dinner, looked rather young and pretty this evening, for her.

"What is the matter with me, you mean?" he said. "Oh, my dear friend, thank Heaven my last action was a good one—the settling of your little ob, I mean. If I survive till to-morrow morning, I am sure it will be as a corpse. I've seen that woman in my dreams for fifteen years—as a corpse, and mourned her with hopeful trust, and here she is in a smart frock, eating a thundering bad dinner, just opposite. Oh, why did I ever come to this unlucky country?"

All this was poured into Mrs. Mowbray's ear in

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despairing undertones, and poor Terence looked quite pale.

"What is wrong, Terence?" asked Kilmorack. "You don't look yourself to-night."

"And that would be good news," he said, "I'd rather be looking anybody else for the next half-hour. Do you think you could pass me without recognising me, Kilmorack?"

"You are not so bad as all that," replied his friend; "who do you want to escape from?"

"*That*," answered the distressed man, jerking his head in the direction of the distant table. "I'll tell you why afterwards; 'tis an amazing tale. I behold the only woman I ever treated badly, and if she catches sight of me, she'll be even with me now."

"Father Andrews' friend looks equal to dealing with her, anyway," said Hugh. "What did you say the name was, padre?"

"Wesloff—I think, Major de Wesloff. He told me he spent a good deal of time up here in the summer. He has built a house somewhere up in the hills."

"Ah!" said Kilmorack, pricking his ears, "is he married?"

"I shouldn't say so," said Father Andrews in his decided way, "he does not talk quite like a married man. There is certainly no wife here."

"He gave us a very good lunch yesterday, didn't he?" remarked Harry, beginning at last to take notice of somebody besides Betty, "and I heard a

chap in the hall ask him when the wedding was to be. I expect that is the lady. He looks successfully in love."

"Don't say that," said Terence faintly. "Oh, take me away. I can see my duty standing up before me, and it's too d—d ugly to face."

"Did you go running about in the sun with no umbrella to-day?" Simon asked. "You seem to be developing all the symptoms of solar delirium."

But at this moment the couple at the far table rose to leave the room. Terence dropped his head in his hands like a man with a shocking headache, and his countenance remained hidden while a silk skirt went rustling across the floor. The major stopped to exchange a word with Harry, and then passed on, following Mrs. Adair out into the hall.

When their footsteps died away, poor Terence raised his head and showed a pale and afflicted countenance.

"Get me a glass of brandy," he gasped. "I never felt so ill in my life."

"Cheer up," said Mrs. Mowbray; "they are gone now. Fancy your still having a story to tell. How interesting!"

"Don't speak of it to those happy young creatures," Terence replied, fortified by the brandy, "sporting among the flowers, let us cast no shadow of gloom over their joy. Oh, Kilmorack, come and advise me; let us have our coffee outside, and face the situation."

There was a general move at that moment, and Hugh, who was quite ready to sympathise with Terence, if only the story proved to be an amusing one, led his friend to a corner of the verandah far from the lights; Mrs. Mowbray followed, unwilling to miss the disclosures that seemed imminent, and Simon, having resigned Betty to Harry with the most perfect coolness and grace, came and leaned over the back of his cousin's chair to listen. The major and Mrs. Adair had quite disappeared.

Terence, fortified by another brandy liqueur and a cigar, looked round on his supporters and said in sepulchral tones: "Boys, do you know that woman's name? Shall I tell you? She is—Mrs. Terence O'Brien, that I gave up for a widow fifteen long years ago."

"What do you mean?" they all exclaimed at once, and not without excuse.

"That is just what I would like to know," replied the Irishman; "what I meant, what she meant, and why the devil we ever meant it at all. Anyway, this was what happened. I was a gay, light-hearted young fellow, and, like all the rest, I sometimes got politely and agreeably drunk. It never made me noisy or quarrelsome, and my wits were simply brilliant; you couldn't find the word that I had not one better to put to it; but there was one great danger: when it was over, I never could remember a word I had said. I was extra confiding at those times,

and wanting to marry every girl I met, and telling her so. I had a friend, a faithful friend, who used to watch my movements and carry me off when the dangerous moment arrived, but we were separated, and I, left alone and unprotected, steered my bark straight upon the rocks, wobbling round a bit at first as you'll see. We were quartered in Belfast (I was doing Militia duty at the dépôt) and the regimental ball came along. I was dog tired, seeing to things all day, and when we began to dance I was so thirsty that, by the second waltz, I could hardly tell the last girl I was in love with from the one I had not been engaged to yet. There were a good many girls, and not over many dancing men, and most of us were affianced in a good-natured sort of way to two at a time. It amused them, and as a rule, they did not say much to their dear parents about it.

"Well, what happened that night I don't know. I can remember hearing it strike eleven, and thinking that the girl beside me was a most beautiful young creature; and I have a dim remembrance of kissing somebody else very willingly, near a table with some nice drinks on it and a lot of palms all round. And, upon my word, if it were the Judgment Day I couldn't remember anything more. Overcome by my labours, I was carried to bed, and when I opened my eyes I had a splitting headache, and there was my servant standing with a couple of

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letters—white square things that made my eyes ache, I remember—and he was saying: 'Answer required, sorr.'

"'Can ye read 'em, Murphy?' said I, 'for I'm sure I can't.'

"'Oi'll thry, sorr,' says he, and he opens 'em both with my razor and begins:

"'Darling Terence, it is but an hour since you held me to your heart—'"

"'Chuck it here, man,' I cried; 'how dare ye be reading my love letters when ye see what they are?'

"'Twas your orders, captain, darlin',' he says. 'Will I peruse the other for ye?'

"'Go on,' says I, my head like wet fireworks going off in sections, "tis not two love letters in a day I'll be getting anyhow.' And so he begins,

"'My dearest boy, my darling child has told me all. She loves you too dearly for me to refuse. Come and talk to her papa and me at ten o'clock.'

"'This isn't the same address as the other, sorr,' says Murphy. 'What do you mean?' says I. 'This is Egerton Villas, and that other was Castle Street,' says that discriminating soldier. 'And who lives in either, can ye find out before ten o'clock?' says I. 'I can find out, captain,' says he, 'but it is nine-thirty-five this minute, and there's no directory in the ante-room. Will I say you are with the colonel getting promoted, till lunch, and ye'll call this afternoon, sorr?' 'Do that,' says I; and off he goes and pacifies the messenger boys that wanted the an-

swers, and not a word could he get out of them about the names of their employers.

"Meanwhile I looked, with pain, for the signature that came after the reference to my recent and unconscious embraces, and this was what I found: 'You own poor little girl, who will love you eternally.' Not even an initial to help my memory. That was the one that came from Castle Street. When I got hold of the other, I wasn't much wiser for it finished up: 'Yours sincerely'—attached to something quite illegible. Of course, the one thing to do was not to go near either of them, but I was ever a warm-hearted, loving creature, and I made up my mind to see them both, beginning with Castle Street, and if I liked that as much as I hoped, perhaps I would leave papa and mamma and Eger-ton Vilas out of it for a day or two.

"By this time Murphy had got me on my legs ('twas a Sunday morning and no six o'clock parade I remember) we found out who lived at my poor little girl's number in Castle Street, stamped on her paper in pretty pale blue. These were Mr. John Petre and Miss Petre.

"I'll have to just leave out the Christian name, I said to myself. I daresay she will be satisfied with a fancy one, Avourneen for choice; and towards two o'clock I went off in my best clothes, and my heart beating like a sledge hammer; for this was an adventure entirely to my liking. I went along employing caution after once getting into the

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street, hoping to get a glimpse of Miss Petre at the window just to make out if she had black hair or gold (I hope it was black), before I took her into my strong arms again. So I walked twice up and down the pavement opposite, never taking my eyes off number twenty-one, and coughing in a gentle way to attract my poor little girl's attention. Pretty soon I saw the muslin curtains in the drawing-room pulled back at one side, and the sweetest face I ever saw looking out at me. Oh, the little Irish face, blooming like a rose, with its blue eyes and white forehead, and the hair that was my favourite colour, blue black, all curling soft above! 'Avourneen, that's the name for you, dear girl,' thinks I, and I marched up to the front door as brave as a lion. 'Twas open for me by the time I reached it, and there was that sweet child, all blushing and laughing, and I gave one look round to see there was nobody looking, and I repeated the embrace on the door mat.

" 'Why,' she says, nestling close, the darling, 'this is a surprise. I didn't know you liked me so much, Mr. O'Brien.'

" 'If my own poor little girl is going to call me Mr. O'Brien,' said I laughing, 'then she must take me where I can talk to Miss Petre, for my heart is full.'

" I thought she looked sad at that, and she wouldn't be kissed again, but opened the door of the drawing-

room, and led me in. There was another girl there who turned pretty red as I came in (she was nice-looking, but couldn't hold a candle to the little one), and there was an old lady knitting silk stockings in a sweet lace cap. The new girl jumps up and shakes hands and squeezes mine, which, of course, I looked pleased at, and squeezed hers. And then she introduces me to her aunt, she says, and makes a little face from behind the old lady's chair, as much as to say: 'Try and bear it patiently, it was not my fault!' Well, I made myself more than agreeable for three-quarters of an hour, and the old lady wouldn't move, and my Irish violet sat near the window by some roses (that weren't half so pretty as she) looking at me with her lovely eyes, and the other girl talked and showed off and made eyes at me; and I was quite used to that, so it made no impression. And at last I had to go, for in decency I couldn't stay over the hour the first visit. And my violet shook hands with me, looking anxious and frightened, and the other girl, that had brown hair and grey eyes and a nice skin, too, she came out into the hall with me. And when she had shut the drawing-room door, bedad, didn't she throw herself into my arms, saying: 'And this is a happy day that has brought you here!' I thought she was in the other one's confidence, so I gave her a kiss or two, just to show how I trusted her, and I said: 'God bless you dear, you are being a true friend to me!'

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“‘Friend?’ says she, ‘sure it’ll soon be something closer than that!’

“I didn’t know if she was arranging to be my cousin or my sister-in-law, things being so vague all round, so I said: ‘Much closer, darling,’ and I gave her another hug, which appeared to pacify her. Then I saw the drawing-room door open a crack, and I said in her ear: ‘Let me know when I can see my own little girl alone, and off I went, the proudest young man in Belfast, with nothing before my eyes but that sweet, rosy face at the window, and all the love in it.

“As bad luck would have it, I was kept for three days with one thing and another, before I could get back to Castle Street; but I wrote burning love letters, and Murphy took them, and brought back fairly scorching answers. ‘She is not shy, because it is on paper,’ I said to myself, and at last I got away and saw her again, only for five minutes, in the evening, when she came running down to the dark street and we had a little talk. ‘How angry Mary would be, if she knew,’ she said. ‘And why?’ said I. ‘Because I love another Mary better than her,’ for I had found out their names now. ‘You’ve a queer way of showing it, that’s all,’ says my little girl, and kisses me with the tears in her eyes and runs away. Well, are you geting tired?” Terence asked suddenly.

“Go on,” said Kilmorack, “give him a whisky and soda, Simon. This all sounds very fresh. I like it.”

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"You are a good boy, Simon; I was thirsty," said Terence gratefully, taking a long glass from Simon's hand; "and now I will try and make the rest short. The next day after that I was sent for home, to my poor uncle that was dying, and he took three weeks about it, and made an edifying end, and left me a little bit of money; and it would have gone against me to have a grand wedding just after his death that I couldn't invite him to, so I wrote to my dear girl in Belfast, that I couldn't wait any longer to be married, I was too madly in love, and here was the money for us to start upon, and wouldn't she just come and meet me at the church door, and I'd bring a license and we could tell her kind relations afterwards. She had told me she was an orphan, poor darling, in one of our stolen talks, and that her uncle and cousin would be glad to get rid of her. Mr. Petre was the uncle, not her father as I'd supposed, and that ought to have opened my eyes, only by that time I was so madly in love that I had lost all my powers of reasoning altogether.

"She wrote back that she would be glad and willing, and we were to meet at a little church where I knew the priest, and prepared his mind to do things quick and quiet, for I had a fortnight of leave before me, and I wanted to make the most of it, and take my darling to Dublin, and give her a new frock or two, for she was shabbily dressed, poor child, and show her a bit of fun. I got in by the night train, and at five o'clock in the morning I was standing at the

door of St. Timothy's Church in pitch darkness, for 'twas November, and there she was before me, all alone, as I had told her to be.

" 'Hold on, darling,' I said; 'here they are coming to open the door,' and they pulled back the bolts inside, and there was Father Fannigan, laughing at us poor lovers, and his old sacristan and a boy for the witnesses, and two candles in the whole dark church.

" 'Come on, ye silly children,' says he, 'I'll make ye man and wife in five minutes. Oh, Terence, Terence, thank God ye are seeing the error of your ways.' For I must tell you I had told that good priest a little tale of having run away with the girl first, and wanting to marry her afterwards, just to make him more quick and willing to help me. She had a big hat on, and she was all wrapped up in her veil, and I said: 'You are wearing high heels, ye naughty girl, to try and look as tall as your Terence,' for she seemed taller than I remembered her six weeks before. Well, the priest said the words and out came her hands, and I put on the ring; and I gave him two pounds for marrying us, and we signed the register, Terence O'Brien bachelor, and Mary Petre, spinster, and then she puts up all her big black veil, and turns round, close to one of those guttering candles and says: 'Kiss me, Terence,' and I gave one scream and jumped three yards back—'twas the wrong Mary."

"Good God!" cried Simon, "what had happened?"

"Well, I didn't know much then, for upon my word the stroke sent me into a kind of fit, and I had brain fever, and the woman I'd married came and nursed me in my lodgings, and told everybody she was my wife—which she was, and by the time I could hold my head up, there was no way out of it but for me to say so too. Lord, how I hated her! And it was her I had kissed at the ball, and she was Miss Petre, and poor thing, she thought all along I was madly in love with her! she could see that by my letters, but she imagined I had a great self-control in her presence. And at first I thought I would bear it, and just run away with another woman, by-and-by, like a gentleman.

"But one day (she didn't know the truth yet) she brings in my own girl to see me, and leaves us alone a minute, and the little darling kneels down by my bed, and says: 'Terence, anything you hear about me, don't you think it very wicked. It is just that once I'd known you I could not care for anything else.' 'Why, what will you be going to do, alanna?' I asked, catching hold of her little soft hand. 'You know it was all a mistake, and as soon as I can talk long enough, I'll get free. 'Twas you I loved all along.' 'I know 'twas,' said she; 'you can kiss me once, for you'll never see me again,' and her sweet blue eyes were all black round with the crying, and she stooped over me and I kissed her, and she went out and drowned herself ten minutes afterwards. Murphy came up and told me that evening, and we

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wept like two babies. And the next time Mrs. O'Brien came into the room, I said: 'Maybe it is not your fault and maybe it is. Anyway, you've broken my heart and killed the sweetest girl God ever made. Go home, and let me never hear the sound of your voice again, or I might want to send you to keep her company. I'll give you half of all I have and I've no doubt you'll persuade somebody to marry you that likes it better than me. Murphy, get a cab for Mrs. O'Brien.'

"And she went in that cab, and I gave her what I promised, and she never troubled me again, for she had no heart really, and had made a very fair thing out of a young subaltern that couldn't have paid for the license at the time she made up her mind to have him."

"Did she never get a divorce?" asked Simon. "You were not man and wife really, she could have got the marriage annulled."

"I never heard," said Terence. "I got out of the place as quick as I could afterwards, and somebody told me she wore weeds, and said I'd been killed in Zululand. And here she is, leading that jolly fat major by the nose, and making me feel as if I must have another fit if I have to look her in the face again."

Terence lay back in his chair, exhausted with emotion and the long recital.

"And is that why you never married?" said Kil-

morack. "It is the strangest story you have told us yet, most amazingly fresh."

"Poor old Terence," said Simon, "what a horrible experience! No wonder you looked a little chalky when you recognised her. Are you quite certain it is the same?"

"Good heavens, am I likely to forget?" he cried. "I have never eaten a bad dinner since that I have not dreamed of that woman's face! And to think I had to come all this way and meet it!"

"Hush," said Kilmorack, "here they come! You are in the dark, Terence, like all the rest of us; you will not be recognised."

Major de Wesloff and Mrs. Adair were strolling along the little terrace path, and paused just below the verandah step. They seemed to think they were alone. Mrs. Adair was saying: "Ah, dear Wenceslaus, you need never be jealous of that memory. My first husband was a wild, hot-headed boy, who worried me into marrying him before I was old enough to know what love meant. I fear my coldness drove him nearly mad. He went off and got killed in Zululand, poor fellow, and I never doubted what his comrades told me—that he showed death the way to his heart. Peace to his ashes!"

"Amen," groaned Terence from his corner.

Mrs. Adair looked round startled, and the major drew her hand through his arm and led her quickly away from the dark group he had not noticed before.

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"The freshest situation I ever assisted at," laughed Kilmorack; "cheer up, Terence, the vacancy is filled."

"And you never looked up papa and mamma and Egerton Villas?" exclaimed Mrs. Mowbray.

"I stopped getting drunk at balls," said Terence solemnly. "'Twas a small reform bought at a great price, but that was better than nothing."

CHAPTER XIV

THE morning after Terence had confided his sad history to his friends, Major de Wesloff went up the hill, intending to have a decisive interview with his daughter. He had found Mrs. Adair more attractive than usual, as she intended that he should; and now, instead of dictating terms, she had adopted a sweet, pleading attitude, which was far more likely to work on his feelings than stronger measures could have done.

She wished him to try and implore Marna to be reasonable, she said, holding his hand affectionately, and he at once decided to act with energy and decision. He had forgotten at that moment that he was a little afraid of Marna; but he remembered it as he started on his lonely walk. He had reached Nikko too late to go up to Chuzenji the evening before, and besides, he wished to see Mrs. Adair first.

Marna was not expecting him, and had just sat down to a solid book, which she thought it her duty to read, when the dogs gave tongue, and she looked up and saw her father coming through the little gate, through which so many new elements in Marna's life seemed to have passed of late. She was very glad to see him, regardless of the fact that a conflict was certain to be in store. As we have seen, there was

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a fighting streak in her somewhere which did not altogether deprecate such amusement.

Major de Wesloff greeted her quite as affectionately as usual, and asked various questions about herself and the house before plunging into the big one about himself. It seemed so natural to find her there, alone, waiting for him, that he forgot to inquire if she had any companion. Suddenly he looked very straight at her and said:

“Marna, why did you not answer my letter? I expected that you would congratulate me, and send a nice message to Mrs. Adair.”

“Why?” said Martha, pretending to look surprised.

“Because it would have been the right thing to do,” he answered.

“And as I always do the right thing, therefore you expected a message,” replied the girl; “but don’t you think there is another way of putting it? Since I did not send it, was it not evidently the right thing for me to refrain from doing so?”

“Your reasons?” he asked, refusing to be led aside from the main issue.

“I had nothing to say,” replied the girl, with a little affectation of carelessness.

“I think you had better find something, then, as soon as possible,” the major answered sternly, crossing his legs and placing his elbows on the arms of his chair, as if preparing for a prolonged discussion.

"Will you suggest?" said Marna, turning a little pale, and also settling herself squarely in her chair.

"Certainly," he replied. "I suggest that you say: 'Dear Father, I am very glad you are going to be married; please give my love to Mrs. Adair, and tell her so.' It is not very hard to say, surely."

"What good would it do you to have me say it without feeling it?" she asked. "I have tried to persuade myself to feel it, and that is no good. The thing is all wrong. I cannot say why, but I know it is, and I am perfectly wretched about it."

"What a child you are!" he cried impatiently. "How on earth can you judge for us? What do you know about anything except your own little interests and pleasures? You talk as if you were here to judge for others, when you are not yet fit to judge for yourself!"

"I know good straight people when I see them," Marna retorted rather hotly. "You are one—the best possible—and she is not. Who is Mrs. Adair? Where does she come from? Why did she arrive in Japan as a widow? There's nothing for a woman to do here, living by herself! I am not the only person who asks questions for which there seem to be no answers. She is not popular, I assure you."

"You are stupid and ungenerous, Marna! You know very well that she came out with a married sister, whose husband was in business here. Everybody knows all about her."

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"And the sister and the husband went away, and she stayed," said Marna, "to marry you, they say."

The major took this without flinching.

"I hope that will be the result," he said. "I begged her to remain, when they left."

"Then I think you might have warned me before I got here," exclaimed his daughter. "I should never have come if I had known."

"You are not obliged to stay," said Major de Westhoff; "I can easily find an escort back to Europe for you."

"Please do," said Marna, at white heat. "I don't think living here improves people's manners or morals. I shall be glad to be among my own countrymen again."

He rose as if to go, and Marna came a step nearer, looking very troubled. "Father, don't go," she said. "I cannot change my mind about this thing, but indeed—you know—it does not change my feeling for you one bit. Won't you put it out of your head, and stay up here with me—and we will have a beautiful time together just as we have had before? I know I am horrid sometimes; but, oh, I will be so good, if you will give up this wretched marriage and come back to me."

For one moment he wavered, looking in her face and seeing the real love and entreaty written there. Then he stiffened. His word was given to Emily Adair, and he would be ashamed to draw back.

"It is you who must come back to me, Marna,"

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he said, rather sadly. "You know quite well that what you ask is impossible."

She did not answer. He came and kissed her forehead coldly, and then went out, as if to go down the hill. She suddenly remembered that he had had no lunch after his long walk up, and ran after him, begging him to return. So he relented and came back, and Marna waited on him, and they talked a little more kindly, and when he at last went away the bitterness seemed gone, although the sorrow remained.

Then "Mädi" sat down to look her life in the face. It had been, but for the loss of her mother, an easy and pleasant one till now; she had never thought that she would really have to plan out an existence for herself alone. What sad work it was! She thought of her longing for "somebody to play with" up here on fine mornings, of how long three or four hours had seemed with only the dogs to talk to, and now—there might lie many years of loneliness before her, years when play and work and everything must be gone through companionless. Well, then, it would be so, she said; not for mere human society would she vitiate her taste and judgment by accepting Mrs. Adair. To whom could she go? Her aunt, who had looked after her before, would of course be the right person, but she had young daughters of her own and had not been altogether pleased when her niece's strong ~~strong~~ personality threw them into the second place. Marna was really free

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from conceit, but she was quite aware that she was too well dowered in external ways to go wandering about the world by herself. For the hundredth time she wished that she had been born a boy, with all a boy's freedom. Was there anything, she wondered, in a girl's lot which made up for the want of that?

She never shirked replying to the questions she asked herself, and this one called up a recollection only a few days old, which sensibly influenced the answer, and when the answer came, she did not like the look of it, and began to think of something else. As she sat musing in the shady pine wood, where the smells were already warm and pungent in the languid afternoon, a little jingle of talk and laughter came on the breeze, and in a few minutes Betty came along the path skirting Marna's hill, accompanied by a young man, who must of course be the newly arrived lover. Marna jumped up and ran down to meet them, and Betty, all smiles, greeted her with a cordial embrace, and presented Mr. Winstanley.

"I know all about it," said Marna, just as Terence had said to him before. "Let me congratulate you. I am so glad you arrived all right."

"We were pretty well knocked about in that storm," he replied, "but nothing matters now. Betty told me how endlessly good you were to her that night. Jolly luck for them that you took them in. This is a rum country, isn't it?"

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"Is it?" said Marna, laughing. "I am not sure that I know what that means."

"It means nice, and queer, and entirely unexpected," Betty explained. "The only things that could not possibly happen come along here as naturally as ABC. Harry and I have been within a few hours of each other for years (yes we have, Harry), and he never came near me. I only have to get to Japan for him to come flying after me and claim me as his bride! It sounds like comic opera, but it is a very serious matter. I have seven large boxes to be got back to England!"

"I was always considered a plucky man," said Harry modestly, "but only two of those boxes are going with us, my dear. Lord Kilmorack may carry home the rest for you in the *Aurora*."

"Is he going home?" Marna asked, as she led them to a seat.

"Some day, I suppose," said Betty. "Just now he says he means to stay a year in Japan—long enough for the *Aurora* to grow a new propeller, apparently, instead of having one bought for her."

"But," Marna began, "I thought you were all travelling with him."

"And what is he going to do with us?" said Betty. "Well, you see, Harry having secured the gem of the party in myself, the others can't bear to be reminded of my absence! Kilmorack has been asking Katsu what it would cost to build a cottage by a lake,

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from which he can gaze at another cottage on the same lake, I fancy!"

"What would that be for?" asked Marna, opening her clear hazel eyes, and catching at a tendril of her hair that the wind kept blowing into them.

"You'll know some day," said Betty sagely; "meanwhile he is scattering us to the four winds. Simon goes home with the Ansellss—he cries for Piccadilly in his sleep, poor child. Mamma has not quite made up her mind, but I rather think she will go too, and—"

"And that funny Mr. O'Brien?" Marna asked. "I would like to see him again."

"I'll tell him so," said Betty, "it will comfort him. He has just met a ghost, poor dear."

"A ghost! What do you mean?" asked her friend.

"Oh, one of the ghosts that haunt warmhearted men who have 'lived their loife!'" laughed the irreverent Betty. "I expect he has met hundreds before. But this one really gave him a shock. Such a nice, quiet-looking woman too: her name is in the hotel book—Mrs. Adair."

"Does he know her?" Marna asked quickly.

"Do you?" Betty replied. "Oh then I'll tell him he can come and pour out his sorrows to one more comforter. That man lives on sympathy. That is why we all love him—dear old Terence."

"You have not mentioned our plans," Harry re-

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marked, in a hurt tone. "I think you might say that we are going to be married on Saturday."

"Won't you come to my wedding?" Betty pleaded. "You know, I do not want any fuss or anything, but I should like to have one girl with me. Do come!"

Marna pondered a moment. Her father had said that he should stay on in Nikko till Monday, and she would gladly go home for a few days, if she could do so without meeting him. The strain of living in the house with people you love, when you are angry with them and they with you, is one of the most intolerable in the world, and Marna would not have exposed herself to it.

"Yes, I think I can come," she said; and then they fell to discussing details, with an interest fully shared by Harry, who was so happy that he enjoyed everything as long as he was in Betty's society.

"Have you got your wedding dress?" Marna asked.

"I am going to be married in a travelling dress," said Betty. "It is much more fun and less trouble."

"And no veil and no myrtle blossom?" said Marna. "Oh, you poor thing!"

"That is what I tell her," said Harry eagerly. "I am sure she could get a white frock in Yokohama. And she would look so ripping in all the fixings."

"One more frock to pack up," said Betty, "and twenty or thirty pounds out of my pocket. No, thank you! This is the frock, my dear boy, and if

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you won't have me in this, I will come in Marna's kimono.

Harry had succeeded in getting his papers put in order, and Kilmorack's party came down to Yokohama in a body, for the wedding. Betty found a white cloth yachting costume among her possessions and put it on, and Marna, who met her at the church door, thought she looked radiantly pretty and happy.

"I was so glad it could be in church, after all," Betty whispered to her bridesmaid when it was all over. "We got the vice-consul to come and witness it here. I don't care a bit about the orange-blossom, but I did want the clergyman."

"You are going to be so happy!" Marna said; "it looks like the real thing!"

"Come and see me in England some day," Betty replied, "and I will tell you how it wears. Don't forget me, dear."

Then Betty said an affectionate farewell to everybody, and even made a nice little speech to Hugh, who had acted as best man, and had buried past fears and hostilities under a beautiful piece of Japanese silver work, his wedding present to Mrs. Harry.

There was no time for much leave-taking, as the bridal pair were starting on their return trip to Europe early that day, and Harry had had to consent to take all Betty's boxes with him.

When they were really gone, and Betty, standing on deck and waving good-byes to all her friends on

the steam launch, had faded into indistinctness, a mournful silence descended on the party returning to shore, and Terence, murmuring something about a bark and a rolling ocean, blew his nose violently and relapsed into the most profound depression. Marna, who had consented to come with them, cried freely, much to her own amazement, and even Kilmorack, with peace and freedom near at hand, realised that the absence of Betty's laughing face made a difference in the circle.

The events which had led up to his liberation seemed natural and consecutive now, and his announcement that he would remain in Japan for the present did not excite much comment among his friends. They were all more or less homesick. Lady Cecilia had got a promise of something very substantial for Simon, out of her husband, so that the young man would soon breathe the town air for which he pined. Mr. Brandon had long ago cut himself loose from the party, in the interests of historical truth and art criticism; and Terence, vowing that nothing could keep him in a country where his widow walked at large, promised to be very kind to Betty's mother all the way back to England. He knew Kilmorack well, and thought that the man wanted solitude and freedom, that he was contemplating some big step which he could best decide on alone. So there were no distressing partings when they all shook hands on the steps of the Grand Hotel.

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Hugh, however, begged Simon and Terence to stay with him a little longer; he said he was going to travel a little off the beaten roads; the weather was lovely now—and there was still so much that they had not seen.

Marna went home to the house on the hill the moment she returned from the steamer, and sat for a long time quite still, wondering if she would ever be as happy as dear jolly Betty seemed to be. Betty had had a good deal of trouble first, there was comfort in that reflection, and then she had loved the man for years, three years. Marna wondered if such a very long time were really necessary to establish the fact of one's own or another's constancy.

Her reflections were interrupted by a most unexpected visit. The boy opened the door and announced confidentially: "Ingirish gentleman, please, missisy!" and was followed by Lord Kilmorack before Marna had time to wonder who was coming. They had only parted on the Bund an hour ago, but she was very glad to see him again, and asked him how he had found out where she lived.

"I asked the vice-consul yesterday," he replied, "and he gave me the address—and your name. Don't you think you have punished me over severely for not remembering it that day?"

He looked hurt and rather grim.

"Really," Marna replied, in her battle tone, "I had forgotten all about the circumstance. There

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was nothing owing on either side, for I had also forgotten yours."

This statement was not literally true; but all is fair in war.

"Was that why you asked Mr. O'Brien to spell it for you?" continued Kilmorack.

"Yes," said Marna, in a voice which trembled a little in spite of her self-control; "I did not wish to run the risk of mixing it up with those of the people one likes. I keep little catalogues of friends—and foes, and—"

"And—?" he inquired, raising his eyebrows and smiling quite indulgently.

"And nobodies," she replied, "the people who are of no importance either way. There are so many."

"Am I one of those, or may I claim to be a foe?" he asked.

"I do not think it really matters, since you do not wish to be a friend," said the girl looking directly in his face, while little flashes of anger came and went in her bright, honest eyes.

"People should not let their friends believe untruths about them," he argued. "You told me an absurd story about your keeping an hotel or something, and of course when I was asked I handed it on. Why did you do it? Where was the pleasure of making a fool of a man who—who—"

He hesitated, and broke off in despair.

"If you remember," said Marna more gently,

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"that morning when you first came, I tried to explain that I had said something in joke, which you insisted on taking seriously. But you ran away in a rage, and would not listen."

"But you dismissed me, turned me out. How could I stay another minute?" he cried.

"You came back afterwards, all the same," remarked Marna.

"And then you let me bring all my tiresome people and quarter them upon you—you let us stay all night and turn everything upside down, and go away, too, still believing that you were Miss Schmidt, who kept an hotel. Was it true or kind?"

"I never asked myself what you thought," said Marna. "I was very busy, it was all I could do just then to feed and house the party, for everything was disorganised, and until Betty called me Miss Schmidt in the morning, I had forgotten the absurd account I had given you of myself. - What did it matter? Lots of charming women do keep hotels; it is a perfectly respectable thing to do."

"Well," said Kilmorack, "it is not your fault that we did not ask you for the bill. You would not have liked that, would you?"

"And why didn't you?" asked Marna. "If you thought I expected it, you ought to have done so. Oh, dear, I understand now." And she began to laugh, as one after another of Mrs. Mowbray's speeches came back to her.

"Understand what?" asked Hugh uneasily.

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"Mrs. Mowbray," replied the girl. "Oh, she was too sweet! She picked out a bedroom for herself, and said she would have stayed a day or two, if she had had her boxes, and they had all been *so* comfortable, and *you* would settle the account. I could not make out what she was talking about, but I see now. This is what you call—fresh, isn't it?" And Marna ended in peals of laughter.

"Disgustingly impertinent!" said Kilmorack, looking black as thunder. "I am so very sorry; please forgive the whole stupid mistake. It was a little bit your fault in the beginning and altogether mine afterwards. I could easily have found out."

"You were very anxious to take a room yourself, do you remember?" she said, quite recovered from her anger now, "and I told the second half of my story to explain why you could not, but the rain opened the door to you in the end, didn't it?"

"And I liked it so much when I got inside," said Kilmorack. "Do you know, I think I shall build a little house, just like it, and stay all summer?"

"Oh, do!" cried Marna, with a flush of pleasure mounting in her face, and a hotter flush of shame following it because she had spoken too eagerly.

"That decides it," said the young man; "and will you help me choose the spot? Katsu, my guide, says that there are two or three bits of land near you, I mean near the lake, that one could have. I could get into it in a month, if the rain only keeps off."

"You seem to have gone into all the details,"

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Marna ventured to say. "When did you first think of the house?"

"The day you turned me out of yours," he replied; "and it was just then that I found out about the size of the *Aurora*. Do you remember what you said?"

Marna shook her head, but she did not look him in the face, and he saw that she remembered quite well.

"You said I might come back and tell you a little more some day," he pleaded, leaning forward and trying to make her meet his eyes.

"Some day is no day," Marna replied, turning away the side of her face which she considered weak, because that tiresome dimple always showed when she wanted to smile, "and coming down to Yokohama is not coming back to Chuzenji."

"Then, when are you going back to Chuzenji," he asked, "since you prefer hearing dates in that spot?"

"Soon," she said. "I have one or two things to see to here; one must have some thin clothes, with the summer rushing at us like this. Perhaps the day after to-morrow."

"How odd!" Kilmorack exclaimed, "that was the day I had fixed upon. May I travel up with you?"

"Not if I am going alone," she said; "but perhaps Mrs. Hayes will be going too."

"I hope she will be, I shall be so glad to see her!" he exclaimed, with conviction.

"Where did you meet her?" Marna asked. "Oh, at Mrs. Carter's of course. I had forgotten."

"So had I," he replied. "I never spoke to her in my life that I remember. But all the same, I shall be very anxious to see her. It will mean—seeing you too."

Then there was silence for a moment, and Kilmorack tried to find something to say, so as not to have to take his leave. Miss de Wesloff seemed to be admiring the view. It was she who spoke first, after all.

"Is that the *Aurora*?" she asked, pointing to a distant speck in the harbour. "I meant to ask you when we went to the steamer this afternoon, and then I forgot."

Here was Hugh's opportunity, and he seized it eagerly.

"I should so like to show you the ship," he said. "Will you come and lunch on board to-morrow? Bring twenty Mrs. Hayeses if you like, as chaperons, but do come."

"Of course I will," she replied; "I was simply longing to be invited. I will find somebody to bring with me. I am sorry my father is away—he loves ships."

"I met him, you know," Kilmorack said, "going up to Nikko. I did not know he was your father, then. We will ask him next time."

"There never is a 'next time,'" said she. "My experience is that nice things never repeat themselves."

"I have an impression that this one will," he an-

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swered, speaking half to himself, as he looked down at her, for they were standing at the window now. Then he said: "To-morrow at twelve o'clock I will be at the Hatoba with the steam launch. Now I must go and give my orders. It *is* good of you to come."

He did not kiss her hand, for he was not romantic enough to think of it. But he held it in both his for nearly a minute, looking into her clear, sweet eyes, until the lids drooped and she remembered to withdraw her hand, and Kilmorack turned and went out without another word.

CHAPTER XV

So there she was at last, the golden-haired girl, on the white ship, with one or two others, to be sure, but King Tom was rubbing his silky brown length against her dress, and seemed to be saying with those wonderful eyes that were so like hers, “I *am* glad you have come. We have waited such a time for you, Hughie and I.”

Kilmorack had summoned Simon and Terence from the hotel to come and help to entertain Marna’s companion, whoever she might prove to be, and they were carrying out their orders to the letter, keeping Mrs. Hayes good and amused at the other end of the ship and leaving the host free to talk to Miss de Westloff.

“What an ideal existence you have!” said she, as she paced the deck at his side. “With your own steam yacht the world is simply yours, to do as you like with. I wonder that you ever want to come on shore!”

“We fly on shore,” he replied, “and think ourselves very ill-treated if our landing is delayed for half an hour. Do you know, in outside things I am sure the best happiness is found in wholesome change. Life is intolerable without winter and summer, heat and cold, light and darkness. I could not

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live in the tropics, and I never was so tired in my life as when I went to look up the midnight sun."

"I know," she said; "I have seen it too. I think that to justify eternal daylight, an eternal happiness is absolutely necessary. Our world is not ripe for it yet."

"Will it ever be?" he asked. "To me the most delightful part of happiness would be the waking from sleep morning after morning and realising that it was still there."

"What would be your ideal, doggie?" Marna asked, stooping down and laying her hand on King Tom's head, whereat his beautifully feathered tail moved proudly.

"An indefinite continuance of the present moment, I should think," said Hugh, looking enviously at the dog. "Won't you come down stairs? I want to show you a picture of a wave. It looks so like you."

He led her down to the long white room, with its sea-blue draperies and shifting lights. He remembered the curiosity he had felt as to whether it would suit her. As she moved across to where the picture hung, all his sense of beauty and colour seemed to sing in his ears for joy. There are two kinds of artists, those who know and those who know and can also express. Kilmorack belonged to the first class. He could not draw in the least, and had never attempted to paint, but he knew why things were beautiful, and was never cheated

into mistaken appreciations. He was one of the men to whom it would be simply impossible to love a plain woman, no matter what her charm and virtue. He knew now that the one he loved was as beautiful as he had always meant she should be. Strong and young, white and golden, with her sunny eyes and fearless ways, there was a vivid freshness about Marna's whole personality as distinctive and delightful as the salt breeze off the sea. Hugh could have said, with King Tom, "We have been waiting for you such a time!"

"What a delicious wet breaker!" she said, turning round to him. "There's the whole of the ocean in it. I want to sing." And without another word she sat down to the piano, and leaning over the keys a little, hummed a bar or two to find her chords, and then raised her head, and broke out into the grand old song, "*Kong Christian stod ved hoien mast*," the most stirring of all the national anthems. She had a full pure voice, and sang as carelessly as a schoolboy whistles some popular air; the strong notes went ringing up and seemed to fill the body of the ship, till even the hands on deck turned to listen. Killmorack, with his dog at his knees, leaned forward in a passion of admiration, feasting his eyes on the lovely picture—the white-clad figure, the golden hair all hazy in the sunbeams that streamed across her head from the low window opposite, the dance of light on the sea reflected in her eyes, and that "passionate ballad, gallant and gay" ringing out from

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her lips. Indeed, this was Marna at her happy best, and no one who saw her could forget the sight.

When the last chords had struck with "Denmark's Christian," she turned and looked at Hugh, too full of the song to notice the fire in his eyes.

"Isn't it glorious?" she cried. "There never was such a song in the world. I never sing it unless something happens, but the wave there seemed bursting with it, and it had to come out."

"I knew it would," he said, coming and standing at her side, "you would not have been *you* without some storm music in you. I knew I should hear it some day." And he looked down into her eyes as she sat with upright face, her fingers lying on the keys.

"And I knew you would like it," she replied. "We northerners are all brothers and sisters, after all."

"Then I want to make a small offering to my 'sister,'" said Kilmorack. "Will she take it, in return for the song?"

"If she can," Marna answered, looking up at him with the sun in her innocent eyes.

"I have only got two things in the world that I care about," he said, speaking slowly and watching her face, "and if you accept them, you must let me throw in a third that is quite valueless. Will you take all three?"

"What are they?" she asked, rising suddenly and

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standing with her back to the piano, where her fingers struck a note or two as she spoke.

"Give me both your hands," he cried, holding out his own.

She obeyed shyly, and laid her hands on his, palms upwards. He stooped and kissed the left hand and then shut the fingers.

"That was the *Aurora*," he whispered, "now she is yours for always. "Come here, Tom." The dog pushed his head up close to them, and Kilmorack laid the girl's right hand on it and looked down into Tom's faithful eyes. "Now you are Marna's dog for ever and a day," he said; then he drew both the trembling hands together and laid them on his breast. "And this is Marna's man," he cried. "Oh, my dear, how I have wanted you."

She wavered a moment and seemed about to draw back, but he held her hands with his hands, and her eyes with his eyes, until she gave him her answer. She straightened herself suddenly and met his gaze with a look of fearless happiness, then slowly she bent her golden head till her lips touched the hands that still held hers.

"Skoll Siger," she murmured, "take Marna's fealty," and she kissed both his hands.

Kilmorack, who had archaic ways of doing things, put Marna in the place of honour at lunch, and sent for the loving-cup out of his cabin. Mrs. Hayes and Terence and Simon, who knew nothing of what

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had just happened, watched him silently, wondering what was coming. When the champagne frothed over the silver brim, he made them all stand up, and, raising the bowl in both hands, held it to Marna's lips.

"Say 'Skoll Siger,'" he commanded.

"Skoll," she murmured, and tasted the wine.

"Now," he cried, "here's to my wife that is to be," and emptied the bowl to the last drop, while the others raised their glasses and came round to shake hands with her, and Mrs. Hayes kissed her laughingly and said it was no surprise to her; she knew it from the moment she stepped on board.

"I did not," said Marna. "He tricked me into saying 'Yes,' in the most shameless way."

"This disinterested girl," Kilmorack explained, "only decided to take me when she found that I went with the *Aurora* and King Tom. She could not have them without me, so she is going to make the best of a bad bargain, are you not, Marna?" he asked, looking at her as if she were the first woman and the Lord had created her for him.

Terence came and shook Marna's hand again and again.

"You are going to marry the finest gentleman I ever met," he said, "and upon my word, I believe you are almost good enough for him."

"I will try to be," said Marna, quite humbly.

Simon took his cousin aside.

"Hughie," he whispered, "you have struck it at

last. Your bride-elect is distinctly fresh. I shall stay to be your best man."

When Marna looked back to that day in after years, it seemed to have been spent in the courts of paradise. The beautiful love was laid at her feet in the high tide of the Eastern noon, the sun's golden tent overhead, the sea's gold-shot blue beneath, with the gay breeze rattling in the cordage, and the little waves laughing against the ship's side, and light and music everywhere. As they sat on deck in the afternoon, Kilmorack sent for the quartermaster and gravely gave orders for the date, and two initials which he wrote on a scrap of paper, to be at once inlaid in golden letters on the deck.

"Very good, my lord," said the man. "Your lordship means polished brass, I take it?"

"Pure gold," Kilmorack replied. "Go and get a Japanese goldsmith to do them, big enough to see from a mile off, mind."

"Very good, my lord," and the quartermaster went on shore at once to attend to it, for Hugh liked to be obeyed almost before he had spoken.

He accompanied his guests on shore, and after Mrs. Hayes had drawn off, lingered by Marna's jin-rik-sha, the faithful Rats looking over his shoulder to know whether he might start.

"May I come up, just for a minute, to-morrow morning?" Kilmorack entreated.

"You have forgotten that we must get back to Nikko," Marna replied. "I—I must tell my father,

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you see, Hugh." It was the first time she had said his name.

"I shall go up in the same train," he declared, "and I absolutely forbid you to say one word to your father till I have made myself known to him. We will observe all the rules, Marna."

"Very well," she said laughing, "then I shall have to go and lie low at Chuzenji, for I am sure my folly is writ in my face. Don't I look audaciously happy?"

"Nothing like what I mean you to look some day," he replied, and then Rats got his signal, and went racing away in the wake of the other *jin-rik-sha*.

Marna did not ask Mrs. Hayes to come in and talk things over with her, for she wanted to be alone, to remember and taste again each perfect minute of the crowning day of her life. Her training, as she had told Betty, went to make of an engagement a sacred thing, an event which would decide all the colour of her future. She came to love with no sordid sham experiences, no recollections to be effaced, no treasons to regret, and love recognised the whole-heartedness of his new vassal, and rewarded it with a great flood of happiness and trust in Hugh, in herself, in the future through which they would pass together—a whole lifetime of golden content.

Suzette Hayes could not back with her to the country, so Marna exercised the greatest possible self-control, and wrote to Kilmorack saying that he must not think of coming by the same train. She

would go to Chuzenji, and wait for him there; probably her father would wish to come up with him. After the note was gone, she remembered that Kil-morack might have been allowed to come and see her off; after all, it would be nearly three days before they would meet again, three days of absolute colourless greyness, in which her only solace would be to remember all the beautiful things he had said to her.

She need not have regretted her omission, for the first person she saw at the station was Hugh, accompanied by Katsu, who had just deposited a superb bunch of fresh-cut roses on the seat of a railway carriage, and, with much discretion, disappeared the moment afterwards.

"Are those for me?" asked Marna, standing before the open compartment and glancing in. "How good you are! I was afraid you would not come."

"I shall always come, my dear," he replied, with the happy confidence in himself which makes the successful man. "If you run away, I shall follow you; if you disappear, I shall find you. You will never be beyond my reach in this world, so don't forget."

"All right," she answered, laughing, "and will you always bring June roses? I never mean to do without them now."

"It will be June all the year round when we do not have to travel in different trains," he exclaimed.

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As the train began to move he jumped off, and stood looking after her as long as he could see her.

"He should not have done that," said Marna to herself; "it is frightfully unlucky to watch people till they are out of sight."

Then she picked up her roses, gave Také her hat to put on the rack, and gave herself up to the pleasant smooth motion, the warm breeze on her cheek, the fragrance of her roses, and the contemplation of the enormous "worth-while-ness" of life.

That evening Kilmorack received a telegram which put him momentarily into a very bad temper. It was from Marna, who seemed to have got no farther than Nikko, and ran thus:

"So sorry, completely forgot my promise to go with Duchess to Kyoto and Osaka. Must be away ten days. Do not like to break faith with old friend of my mother," etc., etc.—all the unnecessary repetitions which women love to pay for in telegrams.

Kilmorack was angry for a moment, and then laughed at his own anger. She might have told him before, he reflected; and then remembered that until yesterday afternoon he had no right to ask her to tell him anything. But what on earth was he going to do with himself for ten days? He could explain himself to Major de Wesloff in as many minutes, and then? He envied Father Andrews his interest in missions, Ansell his curiosity about the geishas. For himself, all the beauty with which he was surrounded seemed unfortunate, superfluous, since he was

only asking for one thing which it could not give him, and which he could not have just now—Marna's society. Katsu was in despair, for he could not amuse his patron, and at last Simon, who, having got Lady Cecilia's promise of Ansell's assistance, had backed out of travelling home with them, suggested that they should go cruising down the Inland Sea for ten days, and perhaps run up to Kyoto from Kobe, and try to catch sight of Hughie's fugitive goddess there. The moving about would be better than doing nothing in Yokohama, at any rate.

As for Terence, Kilmorack could hardly get him to go on shore at all. He was mortally afraid of meeting the lady who had passed so near to him at Nikko; he had found out on inquiry that she called herself Mrs. Emily Adair, and that she had a pretty house in Yokohama, where she entertained a little and counted for a vote in the small social affairs of the place. How she came by her present name he had no idea, and did not wish to inquire, and his only desire was to get away quietly without having to inform her of his existence. In his universal indulgence he confided to Simon de Fresel that she looked quiet and respectable enough on the whole, and if she and that amiable foreigner wished to make each other happy, he did not see that it was his duty to interfere, and if it were, he did not mean to, so there was an end of it.

But for Marna's untimely expedition with the Duchess of Friedland, Kilmorack would never have

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had the one glimpse of real Japan which was granted to him on that voyage, and which taught him more than the reading of thousands of books would have done. Katsu had offered again and again to provide him with an exceedingly beautiful and highly trained companion for his leisure hours. When the guide found that the ladies of the party were no longer to be on board, he inquired whether he might be allowed to remedy the want created by their absence, and was much surprised by Hugh's threat to drop him overboard into the harbour if he mentioned the subject again.

Kilmorack found the Japan which awaits the foreigner in shops and tea-houses and theatres, and other places where he was taken to look at it, as banal and commonplace as possible. The sight of twenty or thirty girls, beautiful though they might be, painted like creatures on a fan, dressed in garments of artistic splendour, every hair in place, every movement the result of the study to please, each with her little box of belongings beside her, being sold for longer or shorter periods to the highest bidders, roused in the Scotchman and the Catholic a burning desire to wreck the whole cynical business and send these poor creatures off with their freedom and some chance of an honest living. There are few Japanese women of any class who would not prefer it to the other, which claims them almost as children, certainly without any volition of their own.

The home life, the Court life, the political or in-

tellectual life of the Japanese is a sealed book to the passing foreigner, and all the goodwill he may bring to the task will never introduce him to it without special luck and special aptitude. In order to appreciate it truly, he must, as it were, divest himself of his own personality and of all pre-conceived judgments and inherited standards. And how few of us in Europe, encouraged from the dawn of reason to pronounce, judge, love, hate, classify, are able to annihilate our conceit so far as to put ourselves into the mental attitude in which we will consent to merely learn!

When we do bring ourselves to learn, it is almost always with a view to some individual and compensating use for the knowledge, not because the thing is a part of abstract truth or beauty, and therefore to be revered, irrespective of the personal relation in which it may stand to us. All that we want in return for our efforts is instruction, with its ponderable market values; the mild and patient study of truth for its own sake results in education, a word so misapplied in modern English that it has lost its meaning, and has been replaced by no other, because that which it rightly signifies has fallen into abeyance.

To educate is to build up, to strengthen and develop the inner man, and so far to polish and perfect the outer one that the most casual intercourse with him reveals his rank. Instruction is a matter of business detail, where we each take what we require for

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a given need. The old sense remains clear in the Italian, where *istruzione* means special knowledge, *educazione* signifies good manners. In old Japanese ideals education was all; instruction as immaterial as wealth or poverty.

Kilmorack was leaning over the vessel's side in the coolest hour of the dawn, waiting for the sea to awake from its sleep, and open those eyes of light which seem to be looking up through the blue in the daytime and are surely closed at night. The dawn breeze was shaking out its wings over the hills, and brought with it scents of fruit blossoms, and fitful sweetness from pine groves and morning incense on temple altars. For the hundredth time he was following the delicate meanderings of the wind runes on the water, light as the touch of breath on a mirror, mystical as the tracings of some lost speech that never can be read by human eyes. Now they lay a palm's width of roughened silver on the blue to break its aching sheen, then the viewless breathings turn aside and give us dim sweeps of water, velvet soft and turquoise pale, crisped once and again to a wreath of spray, like a kiss blown over the sea. Then, without rhyme or reason, a long ribbon of indigo is flung out in far-reaching curves, like a paying ensign from an old battleship, or as if some endless peacock-hued serpent were swimming just low enough under water not to catch the sun on his scales. Sometimes the wake of a vessel is clear to the eye that can see no vessel

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there, and the shadow of a sail will be cast when there is not a sail to be seen. The sea gives no account of itself, and the winds will roar us deaf without betraying its secrets.

In the green walled lakes, and long narrow channels, and sudden spreading oceans with horizons of their own, which form the Inland Sea of Japan, the water never carries you very far from the jurisdiction of the land. Even where it seems most open, sudden rocks stand up in arches or pinnacles and make resting places for tired sea-birds and beacons to warn the ships away; and where the land draws in on either side, gardened, caressed, flowered to the water's edge, the impression is that of passing over a lake in a rich man's grounds, where every beauty that art could gather has been lavished to delight the eye.

In the fulness of the spring morning, armies of fruit trees spread their tents of blossom along the hillsides, and in the warmer valleys, white drifts lay pale against the pines in these natal hours of the day; ghostly shreds of night mist hovered still or moved slowly out towards the water; the sleepy scarlet of some temple gate struck luridly against the vivid darks of the pine trees, and here and there a junk sail, square set, dead silver in the uncoloured air, moved like a great blind bird over the silent sea.

To the northerner (and Kilmorack was a northerner as well as a Celt) there was something almost illicit in such exuberant spendthrift beauty. His

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eyes delighted in it, but as they would have delighted in the exquisite tints of an unintellectual face. All external beauty, to those of his race, is a screen, precious for what shines through it, cheap if the surface is all. His test of what appealed to him in any shape was always this: Would I wish to make it a part of my life? Not for all the alien loveliness in the world, he said to himself, would he consent to live away from his own corner of Europe. Sweeter to him the driving rain on the moor, the unmysterious fragrance of heather and gorse, the pale sunshine over the wet meadow, the Atlantic thundering at the doors, the quick, crowded, pulsing life, the sense of sovereignty to lift man up, and the knowledge of the whole world's helpless envy to keep the Englishman wise; conflict, struggle, power—who would lay these down before his time to tie himself to the apron-strings of mere loveliness that asks nothing of the better side of the man? Ah, how glad he was that his name was Hugh Rose, and that God had made him one of the ruling race.

Having got to this point in his reflections, not for the first time, the silence was broken by a gentle patter of paws on the deck, and a dew-cold nose came rubbing against his hand in salutation. Then King Tom stood up on his hind legs and laid two beautiful fringed paws on the taffrail, and examined the smells one by one with his nostrils quivering and discriminating, and his silky ears distended to catch any interesting sound. The top of his head was like

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wet velvet, and his feathers and fringes were all beaded with the dew.

"What do you think of it, old man?" said Kil-morack, putting one arm round his neck, like a schoolboy. "Isn't a patch on the moor or the deer-forest, is it?"

Tom blinked his amber eyes and gave a loving little whine.

"Quite so," said Hugh. "You would even prefer the turnips and a grey morning at home. Well, we will see what can be done before September."

CHAPTER XVI

THE *Aurora* was nearing a group of islets scattered like a handful of stray leaves on the water at about a mile from the mainland. Two or three were mere points of rock where a few seeds had found roothold and were throwing up branches that waved out of reach in the wind; one island was of a strange shape, like a roofless building whose walls alone were left standing. From the ship it was impossible to see over the ramparts of grey stone which closed it in, but the open space in the centre was testified to by a clump of trees that showed green on a tiny hill above the surrounding rocks. As the details became clearer to the eye, Kilmorack saw that a tall, irregular archway opened through to the heart of the little fortress, and that a boat was rocking empty on the water outside.

"Is the place inhabited?" he asked of Katsu, who had just come up.

"I think not," said the guide. "Some fisherman lands here, perhaps, but there are no houses."

Kilmorack gave orders to lower a boat. He had a fancy to explore the place. In a few minutes he and Katsu were being pulled rapidly to the opening where the other boat lay. As they came nearer, they saw that it was a light, two-oared thing, moored to

a jutting point of rock, and to their surprise, a tiny Japanese child, well rolled up in a bit of blue quilt, lay in the bottom, asleep.

The Englishmen pulled in close to it, for that was the only place where landing would be possible. There were one or two rude steps cut in the rock. Kilmorack sprang out, followed by the guide, and they began to make their way through the arch, which proved to be a kind of natural tunnel, at whose farther end they saw a waving of white and green boughs against the blue, and smooth green hillocks rolling to the entrance as if to fill it up. The sound of the sea lapping against the outer walls mingled each moment less distinctly with the cool rush of a little waterfall somewhere inside the barrier.

At last they came out from the shadow of the archway to the tender light of early morning lying on bough and sward. The place was wonderfully green, and went sloping up like a hollow bowl towards its rocky sides. They rose all round it, shutting it in from the sea, and leaving only the sky overhead for company. At the bottom, a little wood of cherry trees in blossom shivered and ruffled their fragile whiteness in the breeze that came out of the east before the sun, and a flock of petals shook loose and drove fitfully towards the archway. To the right, where the sides rose quite a hundred feet towards the blue, a rill came dancing down and made its last leap to earth from a ledge of rock, whence

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it shot in a long waterfall to a basin full of spray, shadowed by delicate red and green maples that drank the rustling largess on their star-shaped leaves. Beyond the cherry-trees, on a rising ground, was a grove of dark young pines, giving out a resinous odour which mixed with the evanescent honey-like fragrance of the fruit blossoms. Just at the entrance to the pine grove, a tall red torii, or gateway, struck the note of human history in this sea-girt garden.

Silently Kilmorack passed under the pale roof of the boughs, and mounted three grey steps to pass under the torii, his guide following him. It seemed as if some one had passed just before, for a little wing of pale blue fluttered from a tree branch within the grove—a length of crape with a whirl of cloud and a blossom or two printed on it in white—one of these offerings that the pilgrims make at favourite shrines. The trees stood close, with a winding path passing between them, and it was four or five minutes before Kilmorack and his guide found the spot which they were set to guard. Then they saw a sight which stayed their feet.

On the step of a half-ruined shrine a young man lay dying, his face to the sky, his limbs rigid already, and his head resting on the knee of a woman who seemed bending down to hear whether he still breathed. They were both so young that it seemed as if death had blundered in choosing his victim. The woman was still a girl; the man could hardly

have been two-and-twenty. He was emaciated to the last degree, the skin tight drawn over the bones of the face, and all moulding consumed and flattened away by starvation. The poor girl who was helping him to die was a young mother in all the sweet roundness of fresh limbs and nursing bosom and warm enfolding arms, but he was past her help. Behind them the trees made a dusky screen, and the doors of the shrine stood wide. It was but a tiny building, and in its half light a dull bronze Buddha caught blue reflections from the morning sky. Faded flowers stood before the image, and a little cloud of old ashes of incense was blown suddenly out, and disappeared the moment it met the light. The same puff of air stirred the dying man's robe, and the woman leaned over and stretched out her arm to pull the folds into place. Both were dressed in the low-toned blues and greys which the peasants always wear.

Suddenly the man opened his eyes in a wild stare. Then they found those of the woman looking down into them with a pitiful eagerness and something like hope. The man's face changed, the hard lines relaxed, and a smile came to the parched dumb lips. He seemed to drink that gaze of love for an instant, his right hand moved an inch or two as if he would have raised it to her cheek, and then with a groan he stiffened and slipped lower, and his arm fell till his hand rested on the step below. The tragedy was over.

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Kilmorack made a step forward and again paused. The woman had not seen him, and he had not the courage to speak to her. There seemed something shameless in disturbing her first moments with her dead. At first she did not move, but crouched, still holding the head, and reaching her hand down the man's arm to try and find a pulse. Then some look in the eyes made her shudder, and she closed them carefully, the tears now rolling down her cheeks and her shoulders heaving with suppressed sobs. She unbound her little headcloth, and with it wiped the poor dead face where the dews were already frozen; then, as if she were handling a sleeping child, she slowly slipped the head from her knee to the step, pushed a fold of the robe under it, and then rose, sobbing, but intent on her task of honourable service. When she had drawn the sleeves over the hands and pulled the poor garments all into place, she prostrated herself on the ground, crying as if her heart would break.

Kilmorack felt that he could speak to her now. He strode to her side, Katsu following him, and stooped down and touched her shoulder gently.

"Ask her what we can do," he said to the guide, as she looked up, her face already disfigured with weeping.

Katsu spoke to her without expression or inflection, but with evident respect. She shook her head as he ceased, and again bent double and hid her face on the ground.

"This is awful," said Kilmorack. "We must do something for the poor thing. Ask her what was the matter; how it happened. It will do her good to talk. Speak about the baby in the boat."

For answer Katsu approached the dead man and looked down at him for a moment, then he felt the heart. The woman raised her head now, and seemed asking if there were any hope for her. Katsu made a little gesture of negation and then said to Kilmorack: "The child in the boat! Yes, I will ask her about the child, and she will soon speak." Then he turned and said something in Japanese, pointing meanwhile in the direction of the archway which lay beyond the wood.

She rose to her feet at once, and without another word ran into the shadow of the pines and disappeared.

"Will she come back?" asked Kilmorack.

"Oh yes," Katsu replied; "she will not leave the dead, but she had forgotten the child. It was a good thought to remind her of it."

Hugh walked up and down, looking away from the poor corpse on the step to the ever-brightening sky and the vigorous branches of the trees, where the sap was bursting in flesh-coloured shoots that left last year's cones a hand-breadth lower behind on the bough.

Soon a little shuffling footfall stirred the pine needles, and the woman came back, carrying the child. Already her grief was under control; she

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passed Katsu with an obeisance, glanced in some alarm at the foreign man, and went and sat down on the lowest step of the shrine at her husband's feet.

"Ask her what happened," Kilmorack repeated, and Katsu approached the woman and again asked a question. She looked up quite meekly now, and answered, bowing forwards almost across the child. It was a bonny, dark-skinned boy of eight or nine months; his strong little hands tore her robe open and his lips found their way to her breast, and then he lay there, gazing scornfully at the strangers, as if he defied the world to disturb him in his rights.

The familiar duty seemed to calm the mother, and she began to answer Katsu's question in a low, gentle tone, as if still afraid to disturb her husband's rest. Katsu had drawn the little blue towel over the face, and there seemed nothing repulsive or horrible in the sad little family group—the man's last sleep, the wife's last watch, and the careless child dozing in satiety on his mother's breast at his dead father's feet.

With few words and streaming tears, she told her story in answer to the guide's kindly spoken questions, and he translated for Kilmorack, who came closer to listen. There seemed nothing very strange in the facts to her or to Katsu, but the Englishman listened silently, feeling that they were beyond comment.

^{1.} Yes, the man was her husband. They had been

married two years. A few weeks ago her father-in-law fell ill and was dying. His son, her husband, took blame to himself, thinking that he should not have let the old man work in the wet rice-field, and he made a vow that if his father's life were spared, he would come to this shrine and pray, fasting for ten days and nights. The prayer was heard, his father recovered, and ten days ago she rowed him out to the island and left him. He forbade her to return till the time should come for him to go back with her, but she had come every day and peeped through the trees to see if all were well with him. He seemed very still and weak for the last three days, but she had hoped he would reach noon to-day, when she could have given him food and drink, which she had ready in the boat to bring to him as soon as the shrine made no shadow. Why had she not brought them sooner? Oh no! It would have been a crime to tempt him to break his vow. But for the child, she, too, would have now remained to die on the island and go with her husband to the Meido, but she had no sisters-in-law who could feed the baby, so she must remain. The father's spirit would be comforted since his son would always make offerings for him. Honourable thanks to the great lord, would he condescendingly allow his honourable servants, whom she had seen near her boat, to help carry her husband's body thither? She was unworthily weak, and feared she could not do it alone.

As Kilmorack looked at the little woman in the poor blue clothes, and heard the quietly told story, he felt as if the foundations of his reasoning powers had been suddenly withdrawn, and all his mind's house were tottering and disorganised. The mind itself seemed to cry out, "See the point to which our rules and theologies, and noisy rejoicing that we belong to the 'Ruling Race,' have brought us! Could we beat this for greatness, for love, for integrity! What have we done for the truth in comparison to what they have done for a mistake?"

"Call the men from the boat," he said to Katsu. "Tell them to make a stretcher of the oars."

Katsu rose to obey, and Kilmorack was left alone with the woman. He came and stood beside her, looking down at her bent head. She was still weeping bitterly, and the baby seemed to resent it, and clutched cruelly at her hair.

"You poor, poor little soul!" said Kilmorack, in English. "I wish I could tell you how sorry I am for you, and how I respect you and this poor chap. I didn't know there was such grit outside my own race. Here, you little beggar, stop pulling your mother's hair, and take this."

He caught the child's hand, put a roll of Japanese paper money in the stubborn little fingers, and laid them in the mother's. She looked up wonderingly, the tears still rolling down her cheeks; the innocent brown face was still so new to grief that its expressing lines seemed indeterminate and blurred, as if

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used for the first time. He pointed to the father and then to the baby, and she seemed to understand that he meant to help them both, and she raised the child's little fist to its forehead, and bowed far over in acknowledgment, as she took the money and put it in her sash. Then she looked up and said words which Kilmorack could not understand, but he saw that she appreciated the help and sympathy.

It was not long before the guide returned, accompanied by two of the English sailors. They had lashed a strip of canvas to two long oars, thus making a rude stretcher, and this was put on the ground, and the poor corpse, almost light from emaciation, laid in it.

"We have nothing to put over him, my lord," said one of the men, looking round at Kilmorack.

The scanty robe hardly covered the stiff limbs, and the feet were bare.

"Pull some of those white blossoms," Hugh replied, and the sailor went, and came back with an armful of flowering boughs. He laid them across and across the body, and the coldness of death no more struck so icily to the hearts of the living. The woman had been standing anxiously by, and now, with a quick turn she got the baby on her back, and put both hands out to steady the stretcher, as the men raised it from the ground, and the corpse hung low on the canvas between the oars. Then they began to move, and she trotted alongside, holding tight to the bier, which swayed as they walked, and caused

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the flowers to tumble about a little in the breeze. The baby stared at it all from over his mother's shoulder, and seemed to like the movement, for he began to croon and chuckle, and caught at the tree branches on either side of the path. So they bore the dead man through the pine-wood and under the red gatepost, the cherry-trees waving their arms overhead, and at last through the archway, to where the brown boat danced idly on the water.

She pulled the boat in, and made them lay her dead in the bottom, his head to the bows, with the baby's quilt rolled up under it; and they, their English faces looking very solemn, piled all the beautiful blossoms above and around the man, till the little boat looked as if it were carrying a freight of foam.

"Ask her if they shall row her home," Kilmorack said to Katsu. "We can send another boat to fetch them back to the ship."

Katsu translated and she shook her head, murmuring a few words in her own language. She could row well, it was not far, and her father-in-law was waiting on the home strand. He would help her there. Then she fell on her knees and bent her head to the ground to thank him for his goodness, and, rising, looked at the sailors, as if wondering how she could repay them. Evidently an idea came to her, and she searched under a thwart of the boat, and drew out a little square bundle tied up in a printed towel. This she held out to the men, with

almost a smile, saying something at the same time. Katsu translated :

"She says it was the food she had brought for her husband, and that she cooked it most carefully ; these honourable sailor persons may eat it without fear."

"Take it," said Kilmorack to his man ; "she will be hurt if you do not."

So the sailor took the humble offering, saying, "Thank you, missis, and I wish it had gone where it was meant." Then she got hold of her long paddles, stood up in the stern and set her face towards the land, rowing backwards according to European ideas. The wind was a little against her, but she made good progress, and soon there was a wide bit of blue between her and the foreigners who stood watching her. Just then the first rays of the sun shot out from the East, and caught the brown boat with its freight of flowers and death, with its one little rower bending to the stroke, while her blue gown shivered and flapped in the wind, and the baby on her back laughed loud for joy at the warm beams. Soon the sea was a floor of intolerable splendour and the receding boat showed one dark line overflowed by a billow of faint rose, where the sunbeams flooded the flowers. As Kilmorack turned to step into his own boat, the dancing wavelets brought a handful of white petals back to his feet.

CHAPTER XVII

FOR all that the journey had separated her from Kilmorack, Marna was having a very happy time, running about the country with the Duchess and her people, and seeing more of Japan in that intelligent company than she had seen yet in her many months of residence. The Duchess was a highly cultivated woman who had read a good deal of Japanese history and philosophy in preparation for her voyage, knew what she wished to see, and would not be cheated out of it by threats of discomfort and rough travelling. Marna, who could never find a companion of her own sex energetic enough to keep pace with her, found herself really tired at the end of a day of sight-seeing with this lady, who was twice her age. Apart from the things that she *would* see, the Duchess was anxious never to miss any that she *could* see, and would go diving off into narrow streets and disused temples, wayside farmyards or obscure silk factories, in a way which constantly disorganised the day's travelling, and caused night to catch the perplexed party at three or four hours' distance from the resting-place and inn decided on in the morning. Then the guide and his assistant, engaged to show the Duchess everything of interest on pain of instant dismissal, would have to make

the best of some wayside chaya or fourth-rate inn, borrowing beds, cooking utensils, and even food from the head man of the village, who, if not afraid of foreigners, would perhaps put his own house at their disposal. But such liberal-minded elders were rare; and the hostelry would, as a rule, be made tolerable for one night's rest. More than once the leader dragged her party quite beyond the bounds of her passport, and then, her rank counting for nothing at all, she was politely requested to move on by the police inspector who came to catalogue the travellers.

One evening they had already done twenty-four miles in *jin-rik-shas* on and off the *Tokaido* road. The men were beginning to show signs of exhaustion, and the town where they should have arrived by this hour was still a long way off. There was a bright moon, and the night was mild, almost warm; but the endurance of the Europeans was also at straining point. A long day of *jin-rik-sha* travelling is one of great fatigue, and the jolting sets every bone aching in bodies not supplied with Japanese joints. The people of the country never seem to be aware that they have bones at all until they begin to lose them in one of the strange wasting diseases to which they are especially subject.

The long string of *jin-rik-shas* drew up near a bank in the roadside, and the coolies gently lowered the shafts as a sign that they needed a rest. Then they all sat down on the grass, and some lighted their

pipes and sent tiny clouds of the rankest tobacco smoke floating across the moonlit air; others took off their muddy and ravelled straw sandals, and made woeful little jokes about where they would buy the next, and whether there would be any honourable feet left on their comrades or unworthy ones on themselves to hang a sandal upon. For this was the sixth day of travelling; they were getting a little footsore, and there was not so much as a tea-shed in sight where they could hope to buy new waraji for the last stage of the journey.

Comte de Lüten, the recognised adviser of the Duchess, came and stood beside her little carriage and asked her if she were tired. He feared they had made too long a day of it. He was an elderly, courtly man, the controller of her household when she was at home. The other two gentlemen were M. Senkstern, her secretary, and Dr. Martensen, her physician, an extremely clever man, collecting, photographing, studying wherever he went, and carrying round a store of information always at his fellow travellers' command when they wanted it. Madame de Behr and Marna completed the party, and there were three or four jin-rik-shas with servants and guides behind.

"I am tired," said the Duchess, "and I am afraid everybody else is, too. What are we to do? Is it much farther to Yotsuka—if that is the name of the place where we ought to be now?"

The question, passed on to the guides and dis-

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tributed by them among the coolies, brought at least ten different answers. Japanese never agree among themselves about a distance. It depends on various honourable or unworthy circumstances connected with the questioner and the questioned, whimsical calculations not to be undertaken at short notice.

"But we must get somewhere," exclaimed the count; "we cannot ask your Highness to sleep in a jin-rik-sha under an umbrella."

"I see a light through those trees," said Marna, who had also alighted, and with the rest of the party was assisting at the discussion. "Shall I go with the guide and see what it is? We may find a tea-house, or even a temple. They will take us in, I am sure."

"Run along," said the Duchess, "and Count Lüten will go with you. You are always a courageous explorer, at any rate."

They took a guide for interpreter and walked quickly in the direction which Marna had indicated. There was a small wooded patch, enclosed in fencing, distinctly visible by the bright moonlight, and now a lantern could be seen bobbing about among the trees.

The others waited in the road, and both the Duchess and Madame de Behr drew their wraps closer round them. The day had been warm, but the night was chilly. In ten minutes the expedition returned, accompanied by a Japanese carrying a long paper lantern inscribed with a sprawling character

showing out against the light as it tossed about at the end of the stick.

"It is a lovely place, your Highness," cried Marna, starting to run as she came near. "There is a little house, and a little temple, and a little lake, all ready to play with. And below, just beyond, there is a village where they are all cooking their suppers, and I am so hungry that it smelt rather nice."

"How is it you know nothing about it?" inquired Count Lüten of the guide. "You ought to know every step of the way."

Then it came out that this was not the way; that the "Duchess sama" had taken them off the right road in the afternoon when she wanted to see a cave that one of the coolies told about, and ever since they found the cave, he had been trying to bring the caravan round to the road again across country instead of going all the way back to it. He could swear they were not far from it now, but this spot he had never seen in his life, and even the coolies, all from the Nikko district, knew nothing of it. Then he remarked to his subordinate, in Japanese, that if honourable foreigners would follow their own lights, the most experienced guide in the world could not prevent them from losing their way.

At this, Marna, the only one of the party who could catch the drift of his remarks, became very wrathful, and told him, to his great surprise, in execrable but quite intelligent Japanese that he was not paid to criticise his masters, and that the Gaimu-

sho, or Foreign Office, should hear of his impertinence. This reduced him to a properly slavish state of mind, and he at once ordered the coolies into the shafts while he led the way towards the wood, accompanied by the man with the lantern.

The man of the place requested the visitors to alight from the kurmas and walk the short distance through the trees. The moonlight hardly penetrated the roof of branches, and where it did sift through, made misleading patterns on the ground like Japanese characters written in white on black. There was a hostile charm about the place, some opposing magnetism felt at once by the more sensitive members of the party—the Duchess, Marna, and the doctor. He raised his head two or three times and sniffed the air like an animal suspecting the approach of a foe. The trees were white pines, rarely seen in Japan, the straight shaft of cold silver throwing out relentless black branches at a great height from the ground.

Suddenly at a step the wood ceased, and the travellers stood in the full radiance of the moon, which illuminated an elaborate picture before their eyes. A Japanese garden, laid out with perfect knowledge of the ends to be gained, sloped gently down towards a hollow, the way thither marked by flat stones of beautifully chosen shape, deep bedded in the turf, and shining under the moon like worn coins of some huge ancient currency. Here and there upright in the turf, and knelt to by close, nestling bushes of young

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maples, were those tall, strangely formed monumental stones for which rich Japanese give such high prices. They must be of natural formation and of strange and inspiring shapes. One rose like a broad sword-blade for twenty feet and was pierced by a round hole near the top, and the light streamed in a long shaft through the aperture; another was almost like a standard, with a little incurving at its edges, and another, placed above a mimic lake, had the immortal outline of Fujiyama. The maples, and there were many, seemed to be rejoicing in the white steady light that let them play shadow games with their sharp fingers on the grass. There was a stream at the foot of the slope, planted all its length with white irises, tall as spears, in full bloom, giving out light from their pure white velvet hearts and frosty translucent wings that seemed only waiting for a colder breath, to rise and flutter away in the air. A delicate bridge, whose blood-red latticing would not be quenched in the moonlight, divided the iris flags and crossed their brook. On the other side the ground rose in a small round hill, crowned by a building of white wood that rose in pure curves against the whiter sky. In the centre a second story lifted a second roof and gave majesty to the outline; at either side the fretted gables ran out in wings, and the whole was raised by a height of fine polished steps from the sward. Whether the place were a temple or a palace or a simple country house would have been difficult for a foreigner to say. In

the low wing on the right, the amados were open, and a window with a light behind it shone in a pale yellow oval, the only golden note in this night world of white and silver. The rest of the house seemed to be closed; not another light showed anywhere.

"This is not the place I saw," whispered Marna to the Duchess; "that must have been at the other end of the wood."

"Who is this man?" asked the Duchess suddenly of Count Lüten. "The place looks so lonely, so private, I feel as if we were trespassing."

"The guide has been talking to him, madame," replied Lüten, "and has shown him your Highness's passport by the light of the lantern, and he says that his master, who is in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, has given orders that if we came this way, he was to place the villa at our disposal."

"That seems very kind," said the Duchess, "and heaven knows one will be only too thankful to take advantage of it; but, Lüten, how could he have known we should be coming here at all?"

"It is only a few miles off our road, madame, I fancy, and perhaps he is proud of the place."

"He may be," she remarked. "It is like a garden in one's dreams."

By this time they had reached the house itself, and the Duchess paused on the step. The servant, or caretaker, bowed low, and motioned towards the entrance, and she and the others following her passed under a porch, then up three broad black

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steps, and found themselves in a low hall, with carved and raftered roof, other rooms leading off in different directions, and gold screens standing in sharp angles to the light, which played on their surface from a hanging lamp. Two figures, dressed in magnificent old Japanese armour, stood opposite the entrance. The walls of the hall and the passages leading off from it were of creamy, thick paper touched with gold and set in frames of brilliant black wood. The matted floor was soft as moss to the feet. The whole impression was one of silence, sumptuousness, danger—the three elements which even to-day are palpable and terrifying in the atmosphere of great noble houses in Japan.

The screens were pushed open in the wall on the right, and a woman dressed in grey robes bowed to the ground as the Duchess passed through. She seemed to be of the Samurai class, with fine, hard features and most beautiful hands. The Duchess noticed these because the woman came and caught her cloak, which she threw off, and pulled forward a pile of thin silk cushions for a seat. The place smelt of costly woods long enclosed from the light, and again Dr. Martensen threw his head back and seemed to be asking questions about it. In a moment the unstirred air was all vibrating with new presences and European talk, and the hurry of servants bringing in travelling belongings—modernity invading a tomb.

The women of the party were so weary with the

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day's vicissitudes that they were content to sink down on the cushions, finding some angle of wall to lean against, and leave Count Lüten and the interpreter to make the necessary arrangements. Then the servants were shown where to unpack their mistress's things for the night, and the weary travellers began to cheer up at the prospect of a long, quiet sleep. The quiet, the unbroken stillness round this white palace in the wilderness was almost unnatural.

A meal was put together somehow, and served on low tables on the mats. Poor Marna was too tired to eat, and made little jokes instead, and elicited one or two laughs which would have been hearty anywhere else, but here sounded sacrilegious and died away at once.

"Come," said the Duchess at last, "let us go and find something to lie down upon. I cannot sit up without a back for one moment longer."

When she rose to her feet, she found herself stiff from sitting on the ground, and went out, leaning on kind little Madame de Behr and followed by Marna. They were led down one or two long corridors, and then the grey woman showed them into a large room of beautiful proportions, with painted screens partly dividing its length and making shelters for the piles of silk quilts which were to serve the guests as mattresses. Soft lights burned in scarlet lacquered lanterns, three feet high, one near each bed, and a little tray with pipe, tobacco, and

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white ashes stood ready, should the ladies be unable to sleep and wish to smoke. Their elaborate European dressing-gowns and silver toilet things, laid out on the screens or the mats for want of tables and chairs, looked strangely incongruous in the severe and classic simplicity of the place.

"How shut in it seems!" said the Duchess. "I cannot sleep without a little fresh air."

Marna translated to the grey woman, and asked to have a window opened somewhere.

"It is cold," replied the housekeeper, speaking for the first time. She bowed low and drew in her breath with the hiss which means in Japanese good manners, "Respectful awe bordering on terror."

"Still," replied Marna, "the Miyasama (princess) wishes to have one opened. Please do so."

The woman bowed again, and signified that she would fly to obey. The shutter must be removed from outside. She would call her husband to see to it. Then she disappeared.

A long time passed, the night toilettes were all made, Marna's beautiful hair had been shaken out and plaited in a long tail by the Duchess's maid, and the maid had disappeared to sleep in some corner near by, and still the window was not opened. There were no bells, of course. Marna went out into the passage, wrapping her blue kimono around her, and clapped her hands, but no one came. She could hardly go and seek the gentlemen's help in that costume, and since the Duchess, accustomed to have her

wishes promptly attended to, was still fretting over the exhausted air in the room, Marna, nothing daunted, undertook to manage the matter alone.

After one or two mistakes (for she had no idea on which side the verandah might be) she found the right opening in the sliding walls and stepped out into a gallery, closely shuttered in. Fortunately for her, and for the others, as the event showed, she had grown familiar at Chuzenji with the tricks of Japanese carpenters, and knew where to look for the only slide which could be moved. With some trouble she got it out, at the end of the gallery, and stood for a moment, entranced, to gaze at the empty silence of the world outside. The light seemed to have dissolved the solid matter of the landscape and to have left only the ghosts of trees and rocks floating in a bath of liquid sheen. Then a chilly breeze swept over the tree-tops and set all the white fleurs de lys in the brook a-shivering, and Marna caught the shiver and ran back to the inner room on bare white feet, pulling her light robe closely round her.

"Good child!" murmured the Duchess from her side of a screen. "Now we shall sleep. Good-night!"

"Good-night, madame," said Marna, and crept in under her wadded silks.

Three hours later she sat up with a start, and then felt as if she must die of fright, because she had made a rustling with the clothes. Something was

happening, she knew not what or where. Hearing became such a strain that her heart beat wildly to be able to support it. From where she lay in the shadow of a screen she could see only a part of the big room, the end of Madame de Behr's little encampment, some garments folded in a pile on the floor, the Duchess's travelling bag, with her monogram on it, catching a gleam of light. The distances were in shadow; her own lamp had gone out, and only one, the farthest from her, seemed to be burning still. Then she knew what it was. Some one was moving outside—regular footfalls accompanied by a little dragging of drapery were passing that place where she had opened the window. She was up in a moment and creeping round the room close to the wall to reach it. She had lain down in her kimono and did not wait to look for a cloak.

Soon she was close to the inner opening, and it took some courage to pass into the closed verandah, from which she could look into the garden. But courage was not wanting to Marna, and she did not hang back. When she reached the place where a square of whiteness broke the shadow, she looked cautiously round in the direction of the noise.

Two persons were approaching. One was the woman in grey, the other a human being afflicted with some horrible disease which twisted the limbs and gnawed away the muscles. The poor creature could just walk in a dragging way and leaning heavily on her companion, but Marna saw in the

moonlight a useless hand swinging aimlessly—a hand in which the bones had crumbled and left the fingers to grow together in a shapeless mass. The face was full to the moon, and was horribly disfigured by the wasting of the jaw, but there was still an expression to it, a look of interest and almost cheerfulness, and the eyes, all but blind with the clouding of cataract, still seemed to seek and hope for sight. The grey woman led the sufferer kindly enough, and seemed to be recounting some tale that amused her.

She was some incurable member of the family, of whom, doubtless, the gentleman in the Foreign Office was deeply ashamed, perhaps his wife or mother; the remote villa was her home and her servants had orders to treat her as kindly and respectfully as possible. All this, Marna thought out long afterwards; at the moment she felt nothing but overpowering horror. She drew back, trembling, and cowered in the darkness of the verandah as they went by outside. They came so close that she could hear what they were saying. The lady (for her dress showed her to be that) made some remark about the beautiful night, and said that it did her good to come out in the moonlight—the full moon was propitious to sick persons. The other answered "Hai!" with proper obsequiousness. Then the lady asked what were the noises she had heard earlier in the evening, and the woman replied that her husband had found it necessary to air and dust

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the rooms in the western side of the house. This showed Marna that the presence of her party was concealed from the lady for some reason or other. Then they passed on, and she saw the grey woman turn her head and look sharply at the open shutter as she went by.

"Well," said Marna to herself, "this is horribly sad, but there is nothing to be alarmed about, so now I will go back to bed, and I hope I shall not wake the Duchess. It is rather alarming to be sleeping so close to a great personage. What would she say if I snored?"

Marna had got to the Duchess's screen and was trying to slip noiselessly past it when the first sickening shock of an earthquake made itself felt, and the standing lamp fell over and went out. Before Marna had found breath to speak, the second riving shock followed on the first; the house, its beams roaring against each other in the terrific strain, seemed to be turning round with her; then the room was full of shrieks, the Duchess or somebody else clutched her and tried to drag her to the opening where the moonlight dimly showed the way. Marna felt a screen falling against her, and put out both arms to save her head, but the screen, a heavy one of orange-wood inlaid with ivory, was already upon her, and as she went down under it, she heard a tearing sound, a screech of splitting wood, and then a deafening rattle of masonry, while she was choked and blinded by the thick dust of lime and plaster

which instantly enveloped her. She had not lost consciousness, but put out her freest hand to find what was protecting her from the avalanche, and felt the wood and ivory of the screen near her face. It was on both sides of her, and seemed to have fallen at an angle like a pent-house roof, and to have encountered something at its edges which prevented its two leaves from flattening themselves further. She was lying under a gable which protected her for the moment, but—what next?

Those who had been able to escape rushed to the farthest limit of the garden, and turning there saw the west wing of the house, where they had been sleeping calmly two minutes ago, slowly sink as the pillars that supported the roof gave way. Then came a horrible crash, the heavy roof swept the walls outward and fell to the ground, while a great cloud of dust rose and went sailing up towards the moon. In the wood behind, branches were breaking and hurtling to the ground; a landslide had buried half the brook full of irises; and the tall stone shaped like a sword had leaped downhill and annihilated the little bridge.

They were all there, the Japanese and the foreigners, servants and masters, a huddled terrified crowd. The sick woman had been dragged by her attendant towards a little grove of bamboo at one side of the garden. The Duchess, pale and wide-eyed, turned to count the party. They were all there, looking strange enough, Madame de Behr,

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Lüten, the doctor, the servants, they had all managed to escape—except Marna.

“Where is Marna?” cried the Duchess. “I had her with me.”

They looked and called, but Marna was not there, and no answer came from the ruin where the dust was beginning to settle, although a few tiles still came sliding down from the roof.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN Kilmorack landed from the *Aurora* at Kobé, he was greeted with the news of the earthquake. It had happened the night before, and he remembered that at about one o'clock, as he was lying in his bunk gazing at the full moon on the water, he had felt what seemed to be a strong shock on the ship's bottom, as if she had struck on a rock. In a moment he was on deck, and found others there also. But the *Aurora* was steaming along calmly, and the captain recognised the effect of an earthquake felt at sea. This was not his first voyage in the Japanese waters.

It was in the office of the consulate where Kilmorack had come to report himself and collect information generally that he heard such particulars as were to hand. The town itself had suffered a great deal, the consulate had lost a chimney or two, and the place generally looked as if it had undergone a day or two of bombardment. But greater damage had been wrought inland; one or two towns and many villages had been all but destroyed, railways were torn up, bridges snapped, and, alas! many lives lost.

Kilmorack grew graver and graver as the narrator continued his tale, and at last he turned to Simon, who was with him, and said:

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"Where did she say they would be now?"

"Getting along to this part of the world, I am afraid," his cousin replied. Then, turning to the worried official who was trying to talk to them patiently, he continued, "I think some people we know must have been near one of those places. Is there any news of the Duchess of Friedland and her party?"

"You too?" groaned the poor consul. "I have had five telegrams from the Japanese Foreign Office already about her. And her own consul here is tearing his hair, for nobody knows where she is yet."

Kilmorack looked very much troubled.

"I would give a good deal to know if they are all right," he said slowly. "How can one possibly find out?"

"I really cannot tell you," said the other; "the wires are broken in some places and the railway lines torn up in others. Mr. Hamingsen, the Danish Consul, says he has found out that she never reached Yotsuka, where she was to have slept last night, and where rooms had been ordered for her. But she left the other place where she was stopping. I fancy they have got stuck somewhere on the road. They will turn up all right."

"We must go and have a look, Simon," said Kilmorack, as they came out together. "It will give us something to do for to-day."

He spoke lightly enough, but Simon saw that he

was troubled. They then tried to explain their wish to Katsu, who earnestly advised going back to the *Aurora* instead of wandering through a disorganised country full of sad sights.

"My lord not like at all," he said. "Not pretty, not amusing, hotels smashed, no dinner! Ship more better!"

Kilmorack took no notice of his pleadings, and with some difficulty a sufficient number of conveyances was found to take the little party up country. The Duchess and her people could not be far off the great road leading from Kyoto to Tokyo, the old road along which such glittering processions of Daimyo's retainers used to pass, and which is now all but deserted for the railway, which substituted twenty-four hours' for twelve days' travelling. All Japan seems to lie along the Nakasendo, but only the more courageous sightseers will face the two hundred miles to be covered in a jin-rik-sha.

Kilmorack had felt, in witnessing the humble tragedy on the island, that he was in presence of forces unknown to him till now. After two days passed in moving through a country just visited by a serious calamity, he realised more fully the admirable fortitude and patience of people whom, until now, he would hardly class as brothers in humanity at all. Sad enough were the sights he saw, stopping as he did at every village on the way to ask for tidings; houses fallen not singly, but in whole streets, always in the same way—walls outward,

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roof square between, if its central beam had not given and snapped; thousands of poor people turned out of home and homestead; the few belongings buried or burnt, for never yet came earthquake without fire in its train. There was something wringingly pathetic about the people's wretched little treasures, which meant so much to them. It seemed incredible that any one should be the poorer for losing so little. In one place the Englishmen came upon an old man set to guard the family furniture while his son sturdily started to build some sort of shelter out of the remains of their house. The old man was smiling, and Katsu asked him a question, to which he replied quite joyfully. "He says," translated the guide, "that they have been very fortunate, and have saved everything." "Everything" consisted of three worn mats, a blue quilt, a teapot, and a kettle, inside of which was the family kitten, still with a gaudy collar round its neck.

"What is the use of anything in this world," thought Kilmorack, "if people live who can think themselves very fortunate with that?" And he looked at the old man's property admiringly, and gave him two dollars, at which the old head went down in the dust, and the man, to return something for this magnificent gift, begged Kilmorack to accept the kitten, if he had no cat at home. The Japanese always tries to return gift for gift; if it is not value for value, that is the fault of the gods, and he cannot help it.

Everywhere the patience was wonderful. Kilmorack came upon one of those relief camps where the wounded were brought to be tended and food was distributed to the starving. Anxious as he was to get on and assure himself of Marna's safety, he stayed for a time watching the people come up with their bowls to be filled with rice—people who had tasted nothing for twenty-four hours, for the disaster was recent, and help was only now reaching an organised point—yet he never saw one pushing another, the strong taking advantage of their strength, or the weak complaining of the long wait. In the hospital tent the suffering was awful to see, but it was borne with a patient resignation and a gratitude to the surgeons which a Bayard could not have surpassed. And those were people of the poorest classes.

"It is the real thing," was all Kilmorack could say to himself. "God only knows where they get it, but they could not be beaten. It is courage and good manners without their dress-clothes on. I am glad I have seen it."

Terence's sympathies were profoundly stirred. He had refused to be separated from Hugh after all, and had consigned Mrs. Mowbray to the kind offices of some acquaintances who were going her road. The parting between them had been quite touching, for Terence missed Betty terribly, and was sadly disturbed by the encounter with the only lady he had ever known who was not either a "Peri," "a sweet,

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pretty woman," or "a good creature" when he had to speak about her. Also he foresaw that his friend Kilmorack would inevitably be drawn away from him by his marriage, and he would not leave him till he was obliged to do so.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Mowbray," he said; "you know how my heart goes with you. But you are too young and pretty to go travelling home with a young man like me. 'Twould have been the end of my reputation, dear lady. But you'll not shut your door to me when I get back, will you? And you'll find Harry a devoted son-in-law, and that three thousand safe in the bank. Here's luck!" And so they parted.

Terence, as he was pulled rapidly along the roads through the stricken country, wanted to get out and comfort all the poor women he met, and Simon de Fresel was so moved by this his first sight of suffering, that he gave away all his money, then his sleeve-links and shirt-studs, and on the second morning had to be pinned into his shirt with black pins by Katsu. He was not lavish in his phrases of sympathy, but Kilmorack always thought that the impressions of this time had much to do with the decision which, a year later astounded his friends and led him to embrace an ecclesiastical life. He always gave as his reason that the purple was so becoming and "they were sure to make him a 'Monsignore' in time."

It was the afternoon of the second day when Katsu by diligent inquiries was directed towards the

remote village where Marna and her friends had arrived on the evening before the earthquake. He was told of the beautiful house belonging to Count Areshima, of the train of foreigners who had been seen on the road to it, and also of the rumour that it had been destroyed.

Katsu translated calmly for his employer's benefit, and was not prepared for the result of his information. Kilmorack made him repeat it twice before he would believe it, and then, with the deep flush that always came to his face in strong emotion, and a blaze of excitement burning in his steady grey eyes, he jumped back into the jin-rik-sha and told Katsu to tell the coolies that they should have a hundred dollars apiece if they got him there inside the hour. It was a good many miles, but the men raced it for a sum which meant a fortune to them. So just as the sun was setting the three Englishmen reached the gate, where the jin-rik-shas could pass no farther.

It was with some difficulty that Kilmorack and his companions made their way through the grove, for the ground had opened in three or four deep rifts and was covered with fallen trees. A hum of voices and movements reached their ears, and when they came out on the other side the garden seemed to be full of soldiers and policemen. The central part of the house rose up in a dark outline against a green and orange sky, a lower roof was still standing on one side, a torn sunk mass had fallen away from it on the other. An inspector noticed the new-comers

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and approached them, bowing. He took them for officials from the Legation. Kilmorack felt all but strangled at having to get his information from Katsu.

“Where are the ladies? What has happened? Make the man speak!” he cried, in wild impatience.

Then the speech began, in many words and respectful phrases, such as a well-educated policeman must use to persons of high rank, and before it was well started Kilmorack broke away with a strong word and strode towards the ruin where the crowd seemed thickest. He was so tall that he could look over their heads, but as he came up they made way for him, and he saw that they were a fatigue party of soldiers with spades and mattocks in their hands, and that they were leaning on their tools like men who had just accomplished a heavy task. He peered into the *débris* before them and saw, where roof-beams and rafters had been cut away and rubbish shovelled off on either side, a piece of fine matted floor, with a blue silk cushion half buried at one end under some bricks; on one side a superb inlaid screen was thrown back on itself, and peeping out from under the cushion was a tiny thing that the searchers appeared to have overlooked. Kilmorack pulled it out, and recognised a favourite old cigarette case of his which he had lost weeks before.

“Where is she?” he cried, all his features drawn and tightened with sudden terror. “Is she killed? Give her to me.”

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Terence was at his side and laid a hand on his arm. He had waited for the end of the policeman's story.

"They say she's not much hurt, the dear child," he said. "I'll show you the way. I think it is in here;" and he drew his friend towards the central pavilion. There the front door was open and people were coming and going inside. Kilmorack knew nothing till he found himself kneeling on the floor and kissing a pale face that did not blush for his kisses. Her eyes were closed and the long golden lashes lay without a tremor on the cheeks.

As he knelt, some one threw a fur cloak over the girlish figure in its crushed, dust-disfigured draperies, and the Duchess, kneeling on the other side, pushed the lover almost roughly away, and pressed a fold of cambric soaked in brandy between the girl's lips.

"If you dare to tell me she is dead," began Kilmorack, "not a soul leaves this place alive. She won't go alone."

The Celt had suddenly displaced the Christian. "Air!" cried the Duchess, as pale as Marna. "Can't some one put their hand through those windows? The child has been forty-eight hours underground."

In a moment the side of the room was gone, and the cool dusk sent in a wave of freshness. Dr. Martensen came and replaced the Duchess, and applied some drug to poor Marna's nostrils and punc-

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tured her white arm with a hypodermic of some strong stimulant and pressed her lungs up and down till Kilmorack could have murdered him for being so rough with the sweet maiden body which was the temple of his heart. But the roughness was scientific, and Martensen knew what he was doing, and the breath came back in shivers and gasps, and before she opened her eyes two crystal tears welled out from under the lashes and ran down on either side of the temples. Kilmorack wiped them tenderly away, and bent down to listen, for the lips parted as if to speak.

“What is it?” he cried. “Marna, wake up! Speak to me!”

And at the sound of his voice she opened her eyes quite quietly, as if nothing had happened; the laugh dimple just showed at the corner of her mouth, and her poor lips, all wet with the Duchess's brandy, murmured:

“Marna's man?”

“That same, my dear,” he cried, beside himself with joy; and then Martensen looked at him sternly and said:

“Don't make her talk, please.”

“And it was not for you that she spoke at all, at all,” remarked Terence, glowering at the doctor, “and when science and sentiment are satisfied, perhaps you or one of the ladies will explain to Lord Kilmorack how Miss de Wesloff came to be underground for two days when everybody else seems to

have been having their meals regularly? It presents a problem to the British mind."

And he turned round upon Count Lüten as if asking for somebody to fight.

That polite gentleman drew him away into a corner and explained to Terence that he was in the presence of royalty and must restrain his feelings. The Duchess cared nothing for what anybody said so long as Marna seemed to be coming to herself.

One effort to rise was followed by another long period of unconsciousness, but she had the best help in Martensen, and even in unconsciousness her face did not lose the happy look with which she had greeted Kilmorack. She told them afterwards, when she could speak, that she thought she was lying for about two hours under her screen, horribly stiff but not bruised at all, and sure that they would get her out all right. The merciful unconsciousness which came upon her had robbed the situation of all its worst horrors.

These had been tasted by the rest in a way that they could never forget. The moment they realised what had happened they threw themselves on the ruin, the Duchess leading, and tried to tear it away bit by bit with their hands. But the enormous structure of the Japanese roof defied every attempt to penetrate or move it, and the fatigue party could not be found at once, the troops being detailed off in every direction on the same ghastly duty. When Madame de Behr, the tears streaming down her face,

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came with a glass of wine in her hand to where the Duchess had sunk down on the ground beside the pile which covered Marna, she saw that the soft hair which had been only blonde yesterday was streaked with white to-day.

They had managed to send a wire to Major de Wesloff, and when the third morning dawned, a very broken-hearted, middle-aged gentleman, with all the jolly red on his cheeks concentrated in little patches, and his eyes quite hollow with misery, found his way to Count Areshima's villa, and stumbled over some Englishmen who had fallen asleep on the verandah—all the rooms were open, people fearing another violent shock—and the next thing that Major de Wesloff identified was his daughter, lying against a pile of cushions and making faces at a bowl of soup which an unknown young man in spectacles was commanding her to swallow.

In five minutes more Major de Wesloff was shaking the doctor's hand in tearful gratitude, and asking a great many questions without waiting for an answer. And then the Duchess came out, and the Major kissed her hand, and Marna was allowed to put her arms round his neck for a minute if she would not try to sit up. She found the minute long enough to whisper in his ear that he was the dearest man in the world (mental reservation—except one) and that she would never leave him again (mental reservation number two—except once), and that now she

came to think of it, the whole thing had been really rather amusing.

In another twelve hours she was fit to travel, and Kilmorack, who was the most positive man for his age that I ever knew, swore that she should only stay long enough on land to get off it. At least that was how Terence related the conversation to Marna afterwards.

"He said there was only one bit of ground solid enough for your pretty feet, and that was the deck of the *Aurora*. You remember how the dear fellow proposed to you there? Those gold letters look grand, with the date and all! 'Tis there you would be married, if I had my way."

So Kilmorack took command of things in general, and persuaded Major de Wesloff to bring Marna off to the yacht, where, as he said, he should feel safe about her. His violent speeches to the Duchess were condoned, and Terence forgave the rest of the company their safety as soon as he was satisfied about hers. But he confided to Simon, who entirely agreed with him, that had there been a single Britisher in the party the thing would not have happened.

Kilmorack breathed more freely when they were once on board, and Marna's chair was placed on deck, where the awning kept off the sun and made a soft white light all around her. She was very languid for a day or two, much to her own surprise, for

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she had not yet realised how great or how protracted had been the danger. But in all the happy years that came after she could remember no happier days than these, when there was not a duty in life except to lie still and think how beautiful it was; when her father and Kilmorack paced the deck, making each other's acquaintance and getting a great deal of enjoyment out of the process. Every time they passed her chair there was a little glance or smile or word, and she began to value her father's love more now that she had another one to match with it.

Captain Tucker became her devoted slave, and took pleasure in teaching her all sorts of nautical facts and phrases which she was proud to use in and out of season afterwards. She said that she liked the yacht better than any other home she had ever had, and that they would spend months and months at sea.

"I shall never be in a hurry to land, now," Kilmorack said. "I shall never want to stop at all, except to coal. As you said once, one has the world at one's feet with a steam yacht, and when you are with me, I shall have all I want of paradise—it is pretty complete."

Marna was still so new to the ways of lovers that it was an event when she allowed Hugh to kiss her cheek, and as a rule he had to be content with the quick, firm shake of the hand which went to all her friends. But when he said this, sitting beside her

on deck and watching the stars come up from the sea, he felt the hand reach out for his and rest on it with a little pressure of caress. His own closed over it and his arm crept round her and drew her closer to him.

"You don't know what it means to me," he said, in that quiet tone which tells of the fulness of content. "I had begun to be tired of waiting for, and believing in, all sorts of things that one had better wait for eternally, rather than give up and scramble along in the dust without them. I had begun to wonder whether there was any mate for me. I was awfully lonely. We Celts are miserable till we can love something that we approve of—I am afraid it sounds revoltingly priggish, but you know what I mean. We find all sorts of estimable people running about the world, and it is no more possible to fall in love with them than with a toasting-fork or a binnacle. It is all wanted and it is all useful, and we say, 'For heaven's sake take it away and use it, then, and never let me hear of it again!' And then there are the unestimable people who think they repay us for their disreputable debts and flirtations and jealousies by having a beautiful figure and naturally wavy hair. Oh, there are dozens of them, my dear. Wait till I take you home, and you'll see. I hated those quite as much as I did the toasting-fork varieties. I always said to myself 'There's a woman somewhere who is good because she cannot help it—and beautiful, and she does not care whether

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she is or not.' If she has not got golden hair, I will try and bear it, but I am pretty sure she has, and the day I meet her I shall marry her. But oh, my dear, the day was so long in coming! And when I first saw you, I was wild to know if you were the one, and you are, for ever now, the one only thing inside one's heart."

"Hughie," said Marna, after a long silence, "let us be married here, on board. I cannot bear the idea of going back to Yokohama and fussing over a wedding. What do we want with silver-edged cards and new clothes and crowds of people staring at us?"

"I may as well tell you," said Kilmorack, "that no power on earth would induce me to go through with it. I should have lured you on board the day before, and Captain Tucker would have had orders to get up steam and steer for open sea. We must be married on board the *Aurora*! That is evidently the only way to do it."

"I want the Duchess," said Marna, "and Mrs. Hayes, and Willie, and all the dogs. Do you think King Tom will eat Rep?"

"I am sure he has too much regard for his own health," replied Hugh. "Besides, he would never touch a friend of yours, would you, Tom?"

Major de Wesloff seemed to approve of Marna's idea of being married on board the *Aurora*. Perhaps he dreaded complications on shore; perhaps he felt unequal to the organising of such a solemn affair as

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a wedding without an elder woman by his side. Mrs. Adair's name had not been mentioned since he and his daughter met, and if he still intended to marry her, he evidently intended also to keep silence on the subject until Marna's affairs were happily settled.

It seemed as if some little conflict might arise when the religious question came to be discussed, and Kilmorack introduced Father Andrews to Mademoiselle de Wesloff as the clergyman who would perform the ceremony.

"But I am not a Catholic!" she exclaimed, looking rather alarmed.

"And I am," said he, smiling, "and since you are going to be my dear wife, and the mistress of a Catholic household, we will have our own priest to marry us on our own ship, and when you like to go to your church you may; but I think you will soon get tired of saying your prayers alone, and I shall be glad when you feel like coming with me."

It was a sweet May morning when these two stood at last, hand in hand, above the golden letters on the deck to be made man and wife. The *Aurora* was dressed from end to end with gay flags that danced in the sun and the breeze. The *Duchess*, protesting a little about the irregularity, had consented at last, and came down herself to Marna's beautiful white room to pin on her veil and her little myrtle wreath. The girl looked as fresh as the sea foam when she came along the deck in her spotless robes and floating veil to meet her bridegroom; the May

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